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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

CLARIFICATION OF ELLEN GLASGOW'S PERSPECTIVES

by

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(B.S. in Ed., State Teachers College, Bridgewater, 1935)

Second Reader . . . George M. Smith
Professor of English

submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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NORTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

INVESTIGATION OF ALKYL GLUCOSYL SURFACTANTS

by

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b. Martyrdom to the past

c. Union of the social orders

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3. Influence of "malignant circumstances" on character

a. Emotional reaction to bitter defeat

b. Power of love over hatred

4. Kinship between man and the soil

B. Artistic perspective

1. Indirect approach

2. Use of soliloquy and reflection

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IV. The Voice of the People

A. Philosophic perspective

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 - b. Perseverance
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 - a. Diverse family backgrounds
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1. Use of first person

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A. Philosophic perspective

1. Major theme

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a. Deadening reason

b. Evading reality

c. Fostering passivism

d. Exaggerating sense of duty

e. Controlling action

3. Conflict between man's dreams and reality

a. In the pattern of a lady

b. In the life of an artist

4. Tragic power of time

5. Pathos of a well-bred woman's life

B. Artistic perspective

1. Harmony between material and medium

2. Witticisms

3. Psychological Analysis

4. "Daring realism"

VII. Life and Gabriella

A. Philosophic perspective

1. Major theme

2. Revolt from "tyranny of tradition"

a. Facing reality

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1. Major theme
2. The "tyranny of tradition"
 - a. Deadening reason
 - b. Evading reality
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 - d. Exaggerating sense of duty
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3. Conflict between man's dreams and reality
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B. Artistic perspective

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b. Intelligent action

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2. Decline of aristocracy

a. Tragic results of attempts
to block change

b. Disintegration of character

3. Strength of new democracy

B. Artistic perspective

III. Barren Ground

A. Philosophic perspective

1. Novel's meaning to Ellen Glasgow

2. Major theme

3. Decline of Virginia's pioneer stock

a. Negative instinct for survival

b. Sense of futility

4. Conquest of character over
circumstances

a. Gaining strength from adversity

- d. Intelligent action
- c. Imaginacy of love
- d. Dependence on self for happiness

B. Artistic perspective

Chapter III. -- Novels of the Country

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- 1. Major theme
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III. Barnes Ground

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- 2. Major theme
- 3. Decline of Virginia's pioneer stock
- a. Negative instinct for survival
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- 4. Contrast of character over circumstances
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- b. Expressions of the "vein of iron"
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- 5. Kinship between man and the soil
 - a. Their regenerative power
 - b. Spirit of the land as a source of strength
- 6. Influence of time and the "spirit of place" on character

B. Artistic perspective

- 1. Slow growth of central figure
- 2. Single point of view
- 3. Dramatization of consciousness
- 4. Sense of time and space
- 5. Similes in nature

IV. Vein of Iron

A. Philosophic perspective

- 1. Source of background
- 2. Major theme
- 3. Study of the "vein of iron"
 - a. Withstanding hardships of pioneer life
 - b. Encountering outward pressure from religion
 - c. Encountering outward pressure from tradition
 - d. Holding the generations together

- d. Expressions of the "vein of iron"
- c. Definition of the "vein of iron"
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 - a. Withstanding hardships of pioneer life
- b. Encountering outward pressure from religion
- c. Encountering outward pressure from tradition
- d. Holding the generations together

- e. Creating a higher level of life
- 4. The truly civilized human being
 - a. His possessions
 - b. His philosophy

B. Artistic perspective

- 1. "Speech of the heart"
- 2. Natural beauty
- 3. Adaptation of rhythm
- 4. Variations of sound

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I. General plan of series

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 - a. Through feeling
 - b. Through experience and thought
- 3. Blind happiness-hunting
 - a. Illusions of passion
 - b. Flight from reality
 - c. Pathos of a sheltered life
- 4. Man's weakening shelters
- 5. Reflections of a civilized human being

- 6. Creating a higher level of life
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- IV. The Stage
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 - b. Evaluation of goodness
 - c. Need for moral indignation

B. Artistic perspective

- 1. Point of view
- 2. Restricted time and place
- 3. Time as a "subjective medium"
- 4. Symbols
- 5. Delicacy

III. The Romantic Comedians

A. Philosophic perspective

- 1. Major theme
- 2. Man eternal
 - a. Illusion of perpetual youth
 - b. Desire to capture a permanent reality
 - c. Isolation of the human spirit
 - d. Circular course of happiness-hunters
- 3. Revolt against Victorian sense of duty
- 4. Effects of World War I
- 5. Philosophy of universal youth

B. Artistic perspective

- 1. Limited scope and time-sequence
- 2. Circumscribed style

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- 3. Revolt against Victorian sense of duty

4. Effects of World War I

5. Philosophy of universal youth

B. Artistic perspective

- 1. Limited scope and time-sequence
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A. Philosophic perspective

1. Major theme
2. The myth of the "ruined woman"
 - a. 'Seventies
 - b. 'Nineties
 - c. 'Post-war decade
3. Confusion of modern society
 - a. Fear of action and desire for action
 - b. The victim of modern civilization
 - c. The despairing artist
4. The average woman's goodness
5. Interdependence of women

B. Artistic perspective

1. Restricted scenes
2. Reflective interludes and soliloquies
3. Contribution of every fragment of dialogue
4. A central figure as interpreter
5. Vitality of a central figure

V. In This Our Life

A. Philosophic perspective

1. Major theme
2. The "modern temper"
 - a. Distraction from permanent values

IV. They Stopped to Walk

A. Philosophic perspective

1. Major theme
 2. The myth of the "ruined woman"
 - a. 'Seventies
 - b. 'Eighties
 - c. 'Post-war decade
 3. Contradiction of modern society
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 - d. Conversion to materialism
 - e. Fear of life
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 - a. Character as an end in itself
 - b. Instinct for decency
- 4. Diffusion of the stream of life
 - a. Fluidity of time
 - b. Coexistence of selves

B. Artistic perspective

- 1. Creation of a group consciousness
- 2. Wandering flow of thought and emotion
- 3. Basic rhythm
- 4. "Impressionistic recurrence"

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- 1. Elements of character and possessions of the civilized human being
 - a. Positive fortitude, the "vein of iron"
 - b. Self-reliance
 - c. Moral values
 - d. Sympathetic understanding

b. Weakening moral fibre

c. Lack of stamina

d. Conversion to materialism

e. Fear of life

3. Man's instinctive fortitude in the modern world

a. Character as an end in itself

b. Instinct for decency

4. Diffusion of the stream of life

a. Finitude of time

b. Coexistence of selves

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d. Sympathetic understanding

- e. Inner world built of thought
- f. Inviolable "self within the self"
- 2. Character as fate
- 3. Character as an end in itself
- B. From interpretation of Southern history (1850-1939)
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 - d. Rise of the "lower orders"
 - e. Extinction of the "feminine ideal"
 - f. Birth of feminine independence
 - g. Diminishing power of religion and convention
 - h. Effects of World War I
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 - b. Sentimentality of aristocratic tradition
 - c. "Evasive idealism"
 - d. Love as a synonym for happiness
 - e. Love, the fulfillment of a woman's life

- 4. Inner world built of ideas
- 5. Intellectual "self" within the self
- 6. Character as fate
- 7. Character as an end in itself
- 8. From investigation of "souls"
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- 7. Rise of scientific method
- 8. Diminishing power of religion and convention
- 9. Effects of World War I
- 10. Forces of the modern world
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- 12. Romantic conception of the Civil War and the "romantic age"
- 13. Sentimentality of romanticism
- 14. "Evasive idealism"
- 15. Love as a synonym for happiness
- 16. Love, the fulfillment of a woman's life

- f. Pre-eminence of conventional and religious codes
 - g. Man's self-importance
 - h. Man's perpetual youth
 - i. The "ruined woman"
 - j. Happiness without permanent values
- 3. Pathos overshadowing the tragedy of
 - a. Victims of war
 - b. Women of simple goodness
 - c. Victims of wild happiness-hunting
 - d. Truly civilized human beings
- C. From emphasis on the spirit of life
 - 1. Beauty and cruelty of life
 - 2. Joy and sorrow of being
 - 3. Illumination and disillusionment of experience
 - 4. Divergent viewpoints of reality
 - 5. Fluidity of time and consciousness

II. Artistic perspective

- A. Literary craftsmanship, a part of creation
- B. From characterizations
 - 1. Subconscious conception and slow growth
 - 2. Restricted point of view
 - 3. Dramatization of consciousness

1. Pre-eminence of conventional and religious codes
2. Man's self-importance
3. Man's perpetual youth
4. The "ruined woman"
5. Happiness without permanent values

3. Factors overshadowing the tragedy of

- a. Victims of war
- b. Women of simple goodness
- c. Victims of wild happiness-hunting
- d. Truly civilized human beings

4. From emphasis on the spirit of life

1. Beauty and cruelty of life
2. Joy and sorrow of being
3. Illumination and disillusionment of experience
4. Divergent viewpoints of reality
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II. Artistic perspective

A. Literary craftsmanship, a part of creation

1. From characterizations
 1. Subconscious conception and slow growth
 2. Restricted point of view
 3. Dramatization of consciousness

4. Flow of thought and feeling
5. Characters as species of mankind

- a. Types of women

- b. Types of men

C. From portraying the actualities of life

1. Exact reproductions

2. Irony and satire

3. Wit and Comedy

4. Symbolism

D. From creation of the spirit of life

1. Subjectivity of time

2. Symbolic rhythms

3. Contrasting viewpoints

4. Recurring impressions

A writer's philosophic perspective is his special vision of life. As the term is used in this study it applies to Ellen Glasgow's conception of man's relationship with his universe, to her sense of values, to her understanding of universal verities, and to her interpretation of the moral.

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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to discover from Ellen Glasgow's novels and from what she has written about those novels her philosophic and artistic perspectives.

Very few great writers have taken the time to review the entire body of their work from a fully matured point of view. Beyond the books themselves the relationship between a literary figure and a critic or a reader is most often limited to prefaces, diaries, or hurriedly written notes. Ellen Glasgow, however, has written a separate critical volume, A Certain Measure, containing thirteen essays devoted to thirteen of her novels. These essays include not only a critical analysis of each novel, but also the story of her growth as an artist and an objective treatment of the art of fiction. A Certain Measure, then, plus the novels themselves present the unusual opportunity to find and to present her philosophic and artistic perspectives.

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social, economic, and religious problems of the South during the past century.

By artistic perspective is meant the means by which and the manner in which a writer constructs and designs his stories in creating his special vision of life. How Ellen Glasgow composed, how she adapted the basic principles of the novel to fit her feelings about life, and how she employed literary techniques to heighten her understanding and interpretation of human experience constitute her artistic perspective.

Since a great writer speaks for us, not to us, expressing our unspoken thoughts, our unuttered but deeply felt emotions, our own visions, literature can be an outlet and a means of discovering and freeing ourselves only through the process of mastering his philosophic and artistic perspectives. Thus such an approach appears to be the only valid way of absorbing the truth and beauty of his work and of evaluating his contribution.

1 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p.112.

2 Ellen Glasgow, I Believe, (Clifton Fadiman, Editor), p.94.

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CHAPTER I

ELLEN GLASGOW

To Ellen Glasgow creative writing was an extension of personality. "To understand any work of imagination, good, bad, or indifferent," she wrote, "one must understand something of the underlying reality from which it has been distilled." ¹ In an attempt to clarify her perspective, her personal philosophy and her view of the art to which she devoted her life would appear to come first.

From her dissimilar parents she felt she had inherited an inquiring mind, sensitive nerves, and, "less directly perhaps, some tragic conflict of types." ² Her father, a man of exceptional fortitude and integrity, accepted literally the stern God and sterner tenets of the Presbyterian Church. In contrast, her mother, who had been reared in the milder piety of the Episcopal Church, accepted only the dictates of the goodness of her own soul. Such divergence in her parents' outlook determined, Ellen Glasgow felt, the conflicting tendencies of her own nature.

¹ Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p.112.

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¹ Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 112.

² Ellen Glasgow, I Believe, (Clifton Tadmor, Editor), p. 94.

She acknowledged, however, that her personality was influenced more by her mother than by her father. Because of her mother Ellen Glasgow chose to side always with the helpless, and because of her mother she fought unceasingly against cruelty and intolerance. Repudiating her father's God, she accepted the Good, which her mother's innate goodness symbolized, as "the one and only principle deserving of worship." ³ Evaluating the Good, she wrote:

As the image of a revealed Deity faded beyond the vanishing point in the perspective, my vague religious instinct leaned toward a distant trust in some spirit, or divine essence, which many poets and a few philosophers have called the Good. Although the Good was only a part of the whole (was there not proof of this all around us?), it was nevertheless the most pure and the highest part. In a universe such as ours, the existence of an all-powerful Providence, concerned with the intimate hopes and the special fate of mankind alone, was, for me at least, then and always incredible. Yet was it not even more unreasonable to assume that there existed no consciousness superior to ours in an infinity of universes? To this question, I could find no answer; but I knew, or thought I knew, that wherever we looked in nature or in civilization, we could not fail to perceive the signs, explicit or implicit, of an actual presence we had named Goodness. We might observe also, if we persevered with an open mind, that during our life on this planet, the Good, though always struggling and refusing to surrender, was seldom wholly triumphant outside the pictorial fantasies of the saints. ⁴

³ Ibid., p.98.

⁴ Ibid., p.96.

⁵ Ibid., p.104.

⁶ Ibid., p.101.

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Although she had rejected her father's God, a Calvinist conscience, which she believed she had inherited from the paternal side, survived. It claimed its revenge in the illogical feeling that she was responsible for the evils of the world, and that she had no right to seek happiness for herself when others, both men and beasts, were forced to suffer. With maturity and the growth of her philosophy, however, this idea ceased to disturb her.

As she grew older, her inquiring mind led her to study the two great religions of mankind. Although the images of the Christ and the Buddha moved her deeply, the systems of theology that had taken their names failed to arouse a sympathetic response. Then, for a time, the philosophy of mysticism absorbed her interest; and from her extensive reading she gained greater tolerance for the unseen and the unknown. Finally, she discovered "a more steadfast serenity in fortitude than in any dubious faith."⁵

It was through the reading of the The Origin of Species that Ellen Glasgow arrived at "a determining point of view, if not a philosophy."⁶ The implications and inferences of this scientific study led her back to the older philosophic theory of evolution, and on this foundation she found a permanent resting place. Applying the theory of

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evolution to the scheme of the universe, she wrote:

I believe in evolution, though I do not believe that evolution must, of necessity, mean progress. All change is not growth; all movement is not forward. Yet I believe that life on this planet has groped its way up from primeval darkness; and I believe likewise that, in this bloodstained pilgrimage from a lower to a higher form, humanity has collected a few sublime virtues, or ideas of sublime virtue, which are called truths, justice, courage, loyalty, compassion. I believe, therefore, in a moral order; and I believe that this order was not imposed by a supernatural decree, but throughout the ages has been slowly evolving from the mind of man. 7

For a fairer order in the universe, Ellen Glasgow placed little hope in new or different social philosophies. She believed that a truly civilized world could be realized only through the civilizing of the individual man. History had proved, she asserted, that human behavior, if not human nature, had changed and is constantly changing.

The cultivation of good taste, she considered the prime requisite for the further civilizing of mankind. Cruelty, intolerance, and even ugliness might disappear from a society that fostered discrimination in such matters. As the world existed today, she considered the truly civilized man the most tragic figure.

She defined war as an outlet for the destructive element in mankind. To her the worst of war ". . . was not the thought of death in battle; it was not even the thought of the

7 Ibid., p.107.

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"young and the best who were sacrificed; but it was the pleasurable excitement with which so many men, and more especially so many women, responded to the shock and the hatred and even the horror. . . ." ⁸ Wars would cease, she maintained, only when they were made as humdrum as man's struggle for his daily existence.

Fellowship with others and the pursuit of an art or profession were to her the most enduring satisfactions of life. The best tonic for life she called "benign laughter." ⁹

As to what she demanded from life and as to an ultimate meaning in life, she had this to say:

After all, what I wanted from life was to live, to feel, and to know as completely as the circumscribed scope of my being allowed. . . . I have never lost a consuming interest in the origin of ideas, and in philosophy as an expression of man's relation to the mystery around him. For I believe matter to be only a single aspect or manifestation of that mystery, though I doubt whether we shall ever know, through our perceptions alone, a world far other than the world of matter-- or the sensations we assume to be matter. If life has a deeper meaning, it must forever elude us. Neither science nor philosophy can do more than illumine or enkindle the senses through which impressions or what we call knowledge must come. Yet it is of these vague impressions and of this uncertain knowledge that the scholar, as well as the creative artist, must assemble and build up the very substance, the feeling, sight, taste, touch, scents and sounds, of reality. ¹⁰

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What Ellen Glasgow discerned about life reveals the deep sensitivity of her nature and the ardent desire of her mind to grasp the whole truth. No religious creed, in its entirety, appealed to her. She adored only the Good; she hated every form of inhumanity. From experience she built her philosophy on the firm theory of evolution. To her the hope of a better world lay in the further civilizing of mankind. Finally, she believed that ". . . the true value of life can be measured only as it borrows meaning from the things that are valued above and beyond life." ¹¹

In A Certain Measure , Ellen Glasgow intimated that "a feeling of outraged reserve" ¹² was present whenever she wrote or spoke of her books. The special Southern environment of her childhood and youth caused this violent self-restraint, and directly determined her beliefs and theories regarding the art of fiction.

Born in 1874 of an aristocratic family, she grew up in the charming society of Richmond, where abstract ideas were regarded as dangerous and local talent was despised. To avoid the ridicule of her family and friends, her first books were written in secret; and her first novel was published anonymously.

Why did the South fail to encourage its writers ?

¹¹ Ibid., p.110.

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II Ibid., p. 110.

12 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 193.

Why did the South produce so very few outstanding literary figures during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ? Ellen Glasgow's answer to these questions is pertinent here, because it explains the way of life to which she was born and from which she broke away.

Foremost in discouraging the temperament of an artist was the general pattern of Southern life. Concerning this, she wrote:

From the beginning of its history the South has suffered less from a scarcity of literature than from a superabundance of living. Soil, scenery, all the color and animation of the external world, tempted a convivial race to an endless festival of the seasons. If there was little in nature to inspire terror, there was still less to awaken pity in hearts of oak. Life, for the ruling class at least, was genial, urbane, and amusing; but it was deficient in those violent contrasts that subdue the natural pomposity of man. Even slavery, a depressing spectacle at best, was a slight impediment to the faith that had been trained more to enjoy the fruits than to examine the character of peculiar institutions. Although in certain periods there was disseminated a piquant flavor of scepticism, it was a flavour that lingered pleasantly on the tongue instead of lubricating the mind. 13

Moreover, a fundamental idea underlying the civilization of the South was hostile to the inquiring mind. This was an aspect of idealism which Ellen Glasgow labeled "evasive." 14 "Evasive idealism" was that faculty of the Southern mind which, skimming the surface of reality selected the pleasant as the true. By this fantastic exercise,

13 Glasgow, op. cit., p.133.

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agreeable illusions picturing life, not as it was lived, but as it might be imagined to be lived, were passed on from one generation to the next. To dwell, even for an instant, on the dark side of things appeared almost sinful. The distasteful, the painful, and the evil were somehow expected to disappear beyond the horizon if their presence was never acknowledged.

The literature that was produced was deficient in realities. Evaluating the novels which followed the Civil War, and with which Ellen Glasgow had been most familiar in her youth, she said:

Graceful, delicate, and tenderly reminiscent, the novels of this period possess that unusual merit, the virtue of quality. Yet charming as they are in manner, they lack creative passion and the courage to offend which are the essential notes of great fiction. The emotions with which they deal are formal, trite, deficient in blood and irony and true, not to experience, but to the attitude of evasive idealism. In the end this writing failed to survive because, though faithful to a moment in history, it was false to human behavior. 15

It was from "Evasive idealism" and the literature that it produced that Ellen Glasgow's sensitive nature and inquiring mind rebelled. And her spirit of revolt was strengthened when she read the great English novelists and the French naturalists. She called these writers the "true realists",¹⁶ and from them she received her one and only literary influence. From their novels she learned "... this elementary principle in the canons of art, that a

15 Ibid., p.139.

16 Ibid., p.17.

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universe of ideas divides the novel bearing a sincere emotion toward life from the novel that depends upon a sterile convention." ¹⁷

From the very beginning her purpose was clearly defined, for she wrote:

I was, in my humble place and way, beginning a solitary revolt against the formal, the false, the affected, the sentimental, and the pretentious, in Southern writing. I had no guide. I was, so far as I was then aware, alone in my rejection of a prescribed and moribund convention of letters. But I felt, 'Life is not like this.' I thought, 'Why must novels be false to experience?' ¹⁸

To Ellen Glasgow true realism embraced far more than merely transcribing or recording the surface impressions of experience. ¹⁹ Had the term "verist" come her way she would have chosen it to describe herself, for she sought a deep penetration into experience and an illumination of experience. Hence, she defined the art of fiction as "experience illuminated", ²⁰ and explaining its ultimate purpose, wrote :

The chief end of the novel, as indeed of all literature, I felt, was to increase our understanding of life and heighten our consciousness. To do this writing must not only render experience, it must ²¹ interpret and intensify the daily process of living.

¹⁷ Loc. cit.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.28.

²⁰ Ibid., p.14.

²¹ Ibid., p.30.

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17 Ibid. cit.

18 Ibid., p. 8.

19 Ibid., p. 28.

20 Ibid., p. 14.

21 Ibid., p. 30.

Ellen Glasgow's approach to the interpretation and illumination of experience was universal. "For the novel and every form of art," she said, "no matter how firmly rooted it may be in a particular soil, must draw nourishment from the ancient instincts, the blood and tears, which are the common heritage of mankind."²² Rooting her novels firmly in the soil of Virginia, she resolved to write of the South as a part of a larger world, and ". . . to portray not Southern 'types' alone, but whole human beings, and to touch, or at least feel for, the universal chords beneath regional variations of character."²³

Although she herself was a literary technician of the highest order, she placed little import on the value of technique alone. Discussing a literary method, she commented: "Only after one has acquired it, and forgotten the acquisition, does a formula lend itself to adaptation and become an incalculable help to a novelist."²⁴ Her own technique was the product of infinite patience and ceaseless endeavor. As a beginning writer with only, as she said, "my natural distrust of the easiest way and my natural sense of proportion and harmony,"²⁵ she set out to overcome the problems of composition

22 Ibid., p.142.

23 Ibid., p.152.

24 Ibid., p.53.

25 Ibid., p.52.

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- 23 Ibid., p.142.
- 23 Ibid., p.152.
- 24 Ibid., p.23.
- 25 Ibid., p.22.

by teaching herself. This method she considered "tedious"²⁶ and "extravagant". She advised the would-be writer to serve an apprenticeship to a literary craftsman, but to be guided in the end by the inner critic -- the sensitivity of his own nature.

As her novels attest, style was a major preoccupation. To her, style, which she called "the essence of all great literature",²⁷ must be adaptable to the demands of each separate piece of writing. "It should be recognized as a natural part of the organism," she declared, "not as extraneous decoration which may be forcibly peeled off without impairing the whole structure."²⁸

Irony and satire are style devices consistently employed in her novels. She called irony "an indispensable ingredient of the critical vision" and "the safest antidote to sentimental decay."²⁹ Satire, also, was a valuable tool. In writing of the Southern social tradition she found that ". . . through an infusion of satire alone could the dry bones be made to appear animate."³⁰

26 Loc. cit.

27 Ibid., p.148.

28 Ibid., p.176.

29 Ibid., p.28.

30 Ibid., p.179. I Believe, Clifton Fadiman, editor, p.104.

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28 Ibid., p. 176.

29 Ibid., p. 28.

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Creation was always easier for Ellen Glasgow than the actual writing. The use of her imagination began as naturally and almost as early in life as walking or talking. Its early beginning, she intimated, could probably be attributed to the lack of harmony between herself and her early environment. Sensitive in nature, frail in health, and acutely aware of the tragedy and suffering beyond the charming society in which she lived, she unconsciously formed a protective barrier between herself and what she called "a scheme of things which would always appear hostile."³¹

The offsprings of her imagination were always subconsciously created. The history of "Little Willie", the original character of her creative faculty, is important because it illustrates the manner in which almost all her novels were conceived. Concerning "Little Willie" and what he taught her, she wrote :

Far back in my childhood, before I had learned the letters of the alphabet, a character named Little Willie wandered into the country of my mind, just as every other major character in my novels has strolled across my mental horizon when I was not expecting ^{him} them, when I was not even thinking of the novel in which he would finally take his place. From what or where he had sprung, why he was named Little Willie, or why I should have selected a hero instead of a heroine--all this is still as much of a mystery to me as it was in my childhood. But there he was, and there he remained, alive and active, threading his own adventures, from the time I was three until I was seven or eight, and discovered Hans Anderson and Grimm's Fairy Tales. . .

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In those early formative years Little Willie outlined, however vaguely, a general pattern of work. He showed me that a novelist must write, not by taking thought alone, but with every cell of his being, that nothing can occur to him that may not sooner or later find its way into his craft.... I learned, too, and never forgot, that ideas would not come to me if I went out to hunt for them. They would fly when I pursued, but if I stopped and sank down into watchful reverie they would flock back again like friendly pigeons.... 32

Realizing, therefore, that experience was the indirect source of a writer's material, she deliberately cultivated a system for renewing and reviving the source from which her own novels emanated. By following the three principles of her plan, which she called "the method of constant renewal," 33 she was able to write novels for nearly forty years without loss of vitality. The three rules and her comment on them follow:

1. Always wait between books for the springs to fill up and flow over.
2. Always preserve, within a wild sanctuary, an inaccessible valley of reveries.
3. Always, and as far as it is possible, endeavor to touch life on every side; but keep the central vision of the mind, the inmost light, untouched and untouchable.

In my modest way, these rules have helped me, not only to pursue the one calling for which I was designed alike by character and inclination, but even to enjoy the prolonged study of a world that, as the sardonic insight of Henry Adams perceived, no "sensitive and timid natures could regard without a shudder." 34

32 Glasgow, op. cit., pp.192-94.

33 Ibid., p.208.

34 Ibid., p.210.

In those early formative years little Willie outlined, however vaguely, a general pattern of work. He showed me that a novelist must write, not by taking thought alone, but with every cell of his being, that nothing can occur to him that may not sooner or later find its way into his craft.... I learned, too, and never forgot, that ideas would not come to me if I went out to hunt for them. They would fly when I pursued, but if I stopped and sank down into watchful reverie they would flock back again like friendly pigeons.... 32

Realizing, therefore, that experience was the indirect

source of a writer's material, she deliberately cultivated a system for renewing and reviving the source from which her own novels emanated. By following the three principles of her plan, which she called "the method of constant renewal," she was able to write novels for nearly forty years without loss of vitality. The three rules and her comment on them

follow:

1. Always wait between books for the springs to fill up and flow over.
2. Always preserve, within a wild sanctuary, an inaccessible valley of reveries.
3. Always, and as far as it is possible, endeavor to touch life on every side; but keep the central vision of the mind, the innermost light, untouched and untouchable.

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From this presentation of Ellen Glasgow's point of view regarding the art of fiction, certain convictions are worthy of recapitulating. Convinced that the novels which the South had produced did not envisage the truth of life, she resolved, as a writer of fiction, to illuminate real experience from a universal angle of vision. Although she labored constantly for the quality of excellence, she believed that the power to create life on the pages of a novel lay beyond technique-- that it must come from "some subtle essence of personality."³⁵ Moreover, she believed that the novelist must accumulate an abundance of vital resources by deepening his experience and increasing his understanding of life.

The six volumes were published during the first sixteen years of the twentieth century and belong to her "earlier manner" of writing. In this study they will be examined chronologically according to history. This arrangement differs slightly from the order in which they were first published.

1. Ellen Glasgow, *A Certain Feature*, p.4.

35 Ibid., p.163.

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CHAPTER II

NOVELS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

The Novels of the Commonwealth are six volumes which compose a social history of the Commonwealth of Virginia from 1850 to 1912. Ellen Glasgow expressed the general plan of the series in the following words:

. . . I began a history of manners that would embrace those aspects of Southern life with which I was acquainted. I intended to treat the static customs of the country, as well as the changing provincial fashions of the small towns and cities. Moreover, I planned to portray the different social orders, and especially, for this would constitute the major theme of my chronicle, the rise of the middle class as the dominant force in Southern democracy. 1

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THE BATTLE-GROUND

(1850-1865) ³

Philosophic Perspective. "What I tried to do in The Battle-Ground," said Ellen Glasgow, "was to write, not literally a novel of war, but a chronicle of two neighboring families, the Amblers and the Lightfoots, who had lived through a disastrous period in history."⁴ By imaginatively recreating, through the lives of the members of these two families, the decade before the Civil War and the war itself, she created a background for the social transition⁵ which followed the conflict.

In this story of the Amblers and the Lightfoots, she interpreted the aristocratic tradition, the immediate effects of the Civil War on the individual Virginian, and the power of the emotional response to war.

The aristocratic tradition of the South provided one of the dominant themes of Ellen Glasgow's novels. In all its aspects it was probed, examined, analyzed. After stating that, in The Battle-Ground, she tried to portray its "last stand in Virginia,"⁵ she went on:

Whether this tradition was an imported English product or a native flower of the country, is a question of no particular moment. Any faith that molds and influences the plastic character of a

³ The dates under the title of each novel refer to the period of time covered in the novel.

⁴ Glasgow, op. cit., p.19.

⁵ Ibid., p.13.

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5 Ibid., p. 13.

people has validity for those who live under it and believe in it. The culture it creates and establishes is a reality so long as it survives. In the old South this inherited culture possessed grace and beauty and the inspiration of gaiety. Yet it was shallow-rooted at best, since, for all its charm and its good-will, the way of living depended, not upon its own creative strength, but upon the enforced servitude of an alien race. . . . 6

The first half of The Battle-Ground is devoted to the ten years preceding the Civil War. Here, in the sections called "Golden Years" and "Young Blood" the graciousness and the gaiety of the old South are depicted.

Julia Ambler, the mistress of Uplands, illustrates, as an individual, the gentleness and good taste of the aristocracy's culture. Among Ellen Glasgow's characters, she stands with Virginia Pendleton and Victoria Littlepage. From these three women emanates the same goodness of soul which Ellen Glasgow's own mother must have possessed. Mr. Bennett, the tutor from the North, calls Mrs. Ambler "a Madonna by Perugino":

Mrs. Ambler had never heard of Perugino. . . . She was not a clever woman in a worldly sense; yet her sympathy, from the hourly appeals to it, had grown as fine as intellect. She was hopelessly ignorant of ancient history and the Italian Renaissance; but she had a genius for the affections, and where a greater mind would have blundered over a wound, her soft hand went by intuition to the spot. It was very pleasant to sit in a rosewood chair in her parlor, to hear her gray silk rustle as she crossed her feet, and to watch her long white fingers interlace. . . . She was rare and

6 Loc. cit.

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elegant like a piece of fine point lace; her hands had known no harder work than the delicate hemstitching, 7 and her mind had never wandered over the nearer hills.

Although a picture of the gay and romantic side of Southern life emerges as the youth of Betty and Virginia Ambler, Dan Montjoy, and Champe Lightfoot is narrated, the reader is made aware that the whole pattern was dependent upon slave labor. For example, Mr. Bennett watches Mitty, the little slave-girl, search for Mrs. Lightfoot's spectacles:

It seemed a survival of the dark ages that one immortal soul should spend her life hunting for the spectacles of another. To Mr. Bennett, a soul was a soul in any color; to the Major the sons of Ham were under a curse which the Lord would lighten in His own good time. 8

A plantation owner's point of view on the slavery question is proclaimed by Major Lightfoot when Mr. Ambler asks him what he thinks of the government's plan to buy the slaves and return them to Africa:

"Sell the servants to the Government!" the Major cried, hotly. "Nonsense ! Nonsense ! Why, you are striking at the very foundation of our society ! Without slavery, where is our aristocracy, sir ? . . . When I hear a man talking about the abolition of slavery, I always expect him to want to do away with marriage next--" 9

In direct contrast to the typical novel about the Confederacy, Ellen Glasgow presented a realistic version of the Civil War, and at the same time treated the conflict

7 Ellen Glasgow, The Battle-Ground, pp.61-62.

8 Ibid., p.61.

9 Ibid., p.56.

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7 Ellen Glasgow, The Battle-Ground, pp. 61-62.

8 Ibid., p. 61.

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as "one of several circumstances"¹⁰ which had shaped the character and the social order of the individual Virginian. Consequently, the reader of The Battle-Ground grasps the vivid realities of war while he watches the effects of the struggle on Dan and Betty.

Dan enjoys a romantic conception of war until he sees the dead and the dying on the field of battle:

He felt a sudden tremor in his limbs, and his arteries throbbed dully in his ears. "I didn't know it was like this," he muttered thickly. "Why, they're no better than mangled rabbits-- I didn't know it was like this." 11

Big Abel, Dan's slave, who accompanies Dan throughout the war, voices his opinion of the struggle:

"Don't talk ter me suh, I ain' got no use fur dis yer wah, noways, caze hit's a low-lifeted one, dat's what 'tis; en ef'n you'd a min' w'at I tell you, you'd be settin' up at home right dis minute wid ole Miss a-feedin' you on br'ile chicken. You may fit all you want-- I ain' sayin' nuttin' agin yo' fittin' ef'en yo' spleen hit's up-- but you could er foun' somebody ter fit wid back home widout comin' out heah ter git yo' se'f ajumbled up wid all de po' white trash in de country. Dis yer wah ain' de kin' I'se use ter, caze hit jumbles de quality en de trash tergedder jes' like dey wuz bo'n blood kin." 12

As a circumstance, the war is a part of Dan's struggle with fate. As he rises above the bitter agony of defeat, his character develops:

He could never be the same again; something was altered in him forever; this he felt dimly as

10 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p.19.

11 Ellen Glasgow, The Battle-Ground, p.267.

12 Ibid., p.342. The Battle-Ground, p.342.

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- 10 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 19.
- 11 Ellen Glasgow, The Battle-Ground, p. 237.
- 12 Ibid., p. 242.

he dragged his aching body onward. Days like this would prove the stuff that had gone into the making of him. . . . the road led not merely to Romney, but to a greater victory than his General imagined. 13

Ellen Glasgow dramatized the emotional response to war in her presentation of "Pinetop," the mountaineer.

"Pinetop" represents the illiterate white Virginians who, during the Civil War, were ready to sacrifice their lives for the institutions that had lowered their standard of living beneath that of the slaves. From a universal angle of vision, this historic incident was, to Ellen Glasgow, "one of the eternal paradoxes of human nature." 14

As members of the Army of Northern Virginia, "Pinetop" and Dan become good friends. The pathos of "Pinetop's" place in the pattern of Southern life is brought home to Dan when he discovers the mountaineer struggling over a child's primer, attempting to teach himself to read:

For the first time in his life he was brought face to face with the tragedy of hopeless ignorance for an inquiring mind, and the shock stunned him, at the moment past the power of speech. Until knowing Pinetop he had, in the lofty isolation of his class, regarded the plebeian in the light of an alien to the soil, not as a victim of the lavish society in which he himself had moved; a society produced by that free labor which had degraded the white workman to the level of a serf. . . . To men like Pinetop, slavery, stern or mild, could be but an equal menace, and yet these were the men, who, when Virginia called, came from their little cabins in the mountains, who tied the flint-locks upon their muskets and fought uncomplainingly until the end. 15

13 Ibid., p.270.

14 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p.23.

15 Ellen Glasgow, The Battle-Ground, p.385.

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13 Ibid., p. 270.

14 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 23.

15 Ellen Glasgow, The Battle-Ground, p. 386.

Ellen Glasgow appraised The Battle-Ground, which was written during her middle twenties, as "deficient in worldly wisdom and in the sense of experience," but as faithful to "the obliterated epoch"¹⁶ which it interpreted. This is true of most of her early novels. They serve chiefly as a record of unwritten history.

Artistic Perspective. Commenting on her first books, Ellen Glasgow recalled that while writing them she was aware of her lack of an adequate method. When compared with her later work, they reflect her immaturity as an artist although the potential power of her talents is apparent.

She attributed the romantic elements of The Battle-Ground to her own youth and to the fact that". . . one cannot approach the Confederacy without touching the very heart of romantic tradition."¹⁷ The story of Dan's mother, the quarrel between Dan and his grandfather, and the characters' idealistic conception of the Confederacy reflect romantic idealism.

In spite of the romantic flavor of this novel, Ellen Glasgow created a truer picture of the period than emerged from the historical novels of that time. This was accomplished by reiterating realistic details of war; by including characters of different social classes and outlooks; and by observing both the graciousness and the "shallow-roots" of the aristocratic tradition.

16 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p.7.

17 Ibid., p.24.

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16 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 7.

17 Ibid., p. 24.

THE DELIVERANCE
(1878-1890)

Philosophic Perspective. The Deliverance is Ellen Glasgow's interpretation of "the prolonged effects of the social transition upon ordinary lives that were lived by simple folk, alike in the defeated aristocracy and the intransigent democracy."¹⁸ The reaction of each character to the aftermath of the Civil War is both individual and symbolic; and through the response of each character's mind and emotions, a picture of the period is presented.

In Mrs. Blake, Ellen Glasgow embodied a state of mind, common then and afterwards, in which the past was sanctified. Concerning Mrs. Blake, she wrote:

I saw in her, not one old woman groping, blind and nourished by illusions, through a memorable epoch in history, but Virginia and the entire South, unaware of the changes about them, clinging with passionate fidelity, to the ceremonial forms of tradition. ¹⁹

Ever since the war, Mrs. Blake, the former mistress of Blake Hall, has lived in a world of dreams. Blind and partly paralyzed, she has spent her days in the overseer's cottage, believing it to be Blake Hall. When Mr. Carraway, the lawyer, first meets her, he realizes that she is living on an "undiscovered planet" :

For her the Confederacy had never fallen, the quiet

¹⁸ Ibid., p.29.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.27.

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18 Ibid., p. 29.

19 Ibid., p. 27.

of her dreamland had been disturbed by no invading army, and the three hundred slaves, who had in reality scattered like chaff before the wind, she still saw in her cheerful visions tilling her familiar fields. It was as if she had fallen asleep with the great blow that had wrecked her body, and had dreamed on steadily throughout the years. Of real changes she was as ignorant as a newborn child. . . . Wonderful as it all was, to Carraway the most wonderful thing was the intricate tissue of lies woven around her chair. Lies-- lies-- there had been nothing but lies spoken within her hearing for twenty years. 20

Ironical and pathetic is the perpetual flow of advice which Mrs. Blake gives to her children, who are sustaining the fantastic world in which she lives. For example, she instructs her son, Christopher, an uneducated tobacco farmer, on choosing a wife:

"If you do marry--and God grant that you may-- remember that the chief consideration should be family connections, and the next personal attractiveness. Wealth counts for very little beside good birth, and after this I regard a small foot and hand as most essential. They have always been a mark of breeding, Christopher, and I should not like the family to lose through you one of its most distinguished characteristics." 21

Natural results of the social transition are brought to light in the self-denial of Cynthia Blake and in the union of Lila Blake and Jim Weatherby.

In Cynthia Blake, Ellen Glasgow saw a universal type of womanhood. "In the Virginia of that not too distant day, and indeed in the world beyond the borders of the Commonwealth," she wrote, "thousands of daughters were slowly dragging out

20 Ellen Glasgow, The Deliverance, p.74.

21 Ibid., p.478.

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20 Ellen Glasgow, The Deliverance, p. 74.

21 Ibid., p. 478.

a family martyrdom without faith." ²² Cynthia Blake, Mrs. Blake's older daughter, has sacrificed her youth to the drudgery of the farm and to withholding from her mother the poverty of their present state.

Lila Blake, Cynthia's younger sister, and Jim Weatherby represent the union of the social orders. Jim, a member of the new democracy, is the son of a former common laborer on the Blake plantation. Since the war Jim and his father have successfully managed their own tobacco farm. Faithful to the past, Cynthia and Christopher strongly oppose the marriage of Lila and Jim. But it matters not to Lila that the man she loves is, according to tradition, far beneath her:

The stern class-distinctions which had always steeled Cynthia against the friendly advances of her neighbors troubled the younger sister not at all. She remembered none of the past grandeur, the old Blake power of rule, and the stories of gallant indiscretions and powdered beaux seemed to her as worthless as the moth-eaten satin rags which filled the garret. ²³

In Bill Fletcher, the former overseer of Blake Hall, ²⁴ Ellen Glasgow treated "the darkest side of transition."

". . . Fletcher's breed," she wrote, "is all too numerous in the sullen years which must follow invasion and conquest on any part of the globe." ²⁵ As overseer, Fletcher had stolen enough money from the Blakes to buy Blake Hall at the close

²² Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p.36.

²³ Ellen Glasgow, The Deliverance, p.117.

²⁴ Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p.37.

²⁵ Loc. cit.

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- 82 Ellen Wagner, A Certain Measure, p. 86.
- 83 Ellen Wagner, The Deliverance, p. 117.
- 84 Ellen Wagner, A Certain Measure, p. 137.
- 85 ibid.

of the war when the Blakes were reduced to utter poverty. Cruelty and greed rule his life until he is killed by his own grandson. "Was he simply what used to be called, with unsentimental accuracy, 'a bad lot'?" Ellen Glasgow asked. "Or was he the victim of prolonged social injustice and the functional derangement of civilization?"²⁶

Concerning the characterization of Christopher Blake, the central figure of the novel, Ellen Glasgow revealed in part :

I was trying to test the strength of hereditary fibre when it has long been subjected to the power of malignant circumstances. My own theory had inclined to the belief that environment more than inheritance determines character. What it does not determine is the tendency of native impulse nurtured by tradition and legend, unless tradition and legend may be considered a part of environment. ²⁷

From the mind and heart of Christopher Blake, the rightful heir to Blake Hall, the violent resentment of the defeated reverberates. Christopher had been only ten when the war ended. Shortly afterwards, his father died; his mother became blind and paralyzed; the family fortune disappeared; and the Blakes were forced to move into the overseer's cottage. At that time Christopher was taken from his studies to plow the fields and care for the tobacco crop. And the life he might have led was kept constantly before him, for in the presence of his mother he must pretend to be the

²⁶ Loc. cit.

²⁷ Ibid., p.34.

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youthful master of Blake Hall. Because of these "malignant circumstances," hatred for Fletcher and thirst for revenge became the mainsprings of Christopher's life.

After almost twenty years of wilfully feeding his spirit on passionate hatred, Christopher finds his opportunity for vengeance. He attacks Bill Fletcher by awakening and developing the inherited weaknesses of Bill's grandson, Will Fletcher. Will grows to hate his grandfather as much as Christopher does, and finally kills him during a quarrel.

In the end, however, the love of Christopher Blake for Maria Fletcher, Will's sister, overpowers hatred; and, holding himself responsible for Fletcher's death, Christopher tells the court that he killed Bill Fletcher. This final episode of her story, Ellen Glasgow felt later was inconsistent with her theme, for she wrote:

Had I written this book at the present time, it is probable that I should have subdued the romantic note to an ending of stark tragedy. . . I have doubted, in later years, whether any love, however exalted could have conquered the triumphant hatred in Christopher's heart and mind. 28

So, through her foreground characters, Ellen Glasgow presented and interpreted the "prolonged effect" of the Civil War. Because in her characterizations she stressed environment and tradition as the chief determinants of emotional and mental reactions, her interpretation would be

28 Ibid., p.44.

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applicable to a social upheaval anywhere. Her characters are not types, yet they embody universal responses to the aftermath of drastic social changes. Mrs. Blake symbolizes the sanctification of the past; Cynthia, a martyrdom to the past; Lila and Jim, the democracy of the future; Bill Fletcher, the "sinister spawn of society in convulsion";²⁹ and Christopher, the violent emotional reaction to bitter defeat.

Like Barren Ground, The Deliverance is a novel of the soil. The universal kinship between man and the earth is portrayed in Christopher's relation to the soil. ". . .denied all inner harmony," Ellen Glasgow wrote, "he could find peace and freedom only in communion with that earth which had moulded both him and his race."³⁰

Christopher is first introduced to the reader by Mr. Carraway, who observes as he watches him that: "In his pose, in his walk, in the careless carriage of his head, there was something of the large freedom of the elements."³¹ In the opening paragraphs of each section of the novel, this bond of sympathy is reiterated. As Book Four, "The Awakening," begins, Christopher and the earth share the coming of spring;

The wind which blew straight toward him from the opening beyond the strip of wood in which he walked, brought the fresh scent of the upturned fields and of the swelling buds putting out with the warm sunshine. In his own veins he felt also that the blood which comes with the rising sap alike

29 Ibid., p.37.

30 Ibid., p.33.

31 Ellen Glasgow, The Deliverance, p.13.

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32 Ibid., p. 37.

30 Ibid., p. 33.

31 Ellen Glasgow, The Deliverance, p. 13.

to a man and to a tree, worked restlessly in his limbs at the touch of spring. Nature was alive again, and he felt vaguely that in the resurrection surrounding him he must have his part-- that in him as well as in the earth the spirit of life must move and put forth in gladness. 32

Artistic Perspective. Among the techniques employed to realize the purposes of The Deliverance, Ellen Glasgow noted the indirect approach, the use of soliloquy and reflection, and the use of contrasts.

She resorted to an indirect approach primarily to establish probability. The reader first observes the Fletchers, the Blakes, and the scene itself through the eyes and mind of a sympathetic yet bewildered stranger-- Mr. Carraway, the lawyer. Through the medium of Mr. Carraway's impartial consciousness, the entire scene gathers substance and validity before the narrator enters the troubled mind of Christopher Blake.

Since the story does not begin until many years after the war, the past which determined the present is created through retrospection, principally, on the part of Christopher and his mother. Christopher's soliloquies, as he revels in hatred, build up the immediate past, while Mrs. Blake's reflections illuminate the distant past. Thus, the continuity of occurrences remains unbroken.

32 Ibid., p.337.

33 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp.33-34.

34 Ibid., p.35.

35 Ibid., p.37.

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Light and dark contrasts, without subtle variations, were used in this novel to accentuate the relationship between the human figures and the landscape; to emphasize the primitive emotions and deep instincts which control Christopher and Fletcher; and to leave no doubt in the reader's mind that hatred, not love, is the dominant theme. "The tone would be harsh, and the illumination would never be softened or diffused," wrote Ellen Glasgow. "For this story," she added, "as I wove the outline with my inadequate youthful technique was meant to follow an epic curve and to be bathed in an epic quality of atmosphere." ³³

Christopher Blake, as "a natural projection of the ³⁴ landscape," reflects the light and dark moods of nature. The antagonism within his troubled soul is clearly defined in the attraction and repulsion he feels toward Will Fletcher, and in the struggle between love and noble courage, on the one side, and passionate hatred and desire for revenge, on the other side. The strong contradictions of this novel are also noted in the distribution of actions and incidents.

Looking back on The Deliverance after thirty-four years, Ellen Glasgow felt that the theme was not completely developed. And she added: "The book was written too soon. I grew slowly; I matured late; and my earliest novels were the result of intuitive understanding alone." ³⁵

33 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp.33-34.

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THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

(1870-1895)

Philosophic Perspective. The Voice of the People is Ellen Glasgow's realistic portrayal of the political advancement of the rural, lower middle class. As to the place of this novel in relation to actual history, Ellen Glasgow wrote:

In the final defeat of the aristocratic tradition, power had fallen from the hands of the Virginia planters into the hands of what used to be called "the lower orders," and an insurgent democracy was harnessing this power of its own particular designs. From this group, then, and this democracy, my central figure, the son of a "peanut farmer," and a "poor white," would thrust upward, as I saw the underprivileged of the epoch thrusting upward to political authority all over the Commonwealth. 36

Nicholas Burr is Ellen Glasgow's "central figure" and the representative of the poorer class from the rural districts of Virginia. As his biographer, Ellen Glasgow emphasized those qualities of character which she believed insured success in any age and in any society. Moreover, she treated, from a realistic viewpoint, the social barriers between the new democracy and the old aristocracy, the attributes of the two classes which obstructed their integration, and the political methods of the period.

Nick Burr is superior to circumstances because of his single-mindedness, his courage to act, and his fortitude.

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At twelve he determines to rise above his class:

He would not be like his father, of this he was convinced-- his father, who was always working with nothing to show for it-- whose planting was never on time, and whose implements were never in place. His father had never had this gnawing desire to know things, this passionate hatred of the work which he might not neglect. His father had never tried to beat against the barriers of his ignorance and been driven back, and beat again and wept, and read what he couldn't understand. 37

Rebelling from the aimless drudgery and the natural pessimism of his father's way of life, Nick attends school without shirking his share of the farm work. Although his studies are interrupted for a time, when he is forced to accept a position as a clerk in a local store to help pay his father's debts, he finally succeeds in working his way through the state university and in passing the bar. After successfully conducting his own law office, he is elected a member of the General Assembly.

In Richmond he becomes the leader of the legislative body and the chairman of the Democratic Party. Because, in these capacities, he places the rights of the common man above party politics and above the selfish interests of the aristocracy, he is elected Governor of the Commonwealth.

To the casual observer Nick's success seems spectacular but he himself recognizes the qualities which shaped it:

The success that men spoke of with astonished eyes-- the transformation of the barefooted boy into the

37 Ellen Glasgow, The Voice of the People, p.41.

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37 Ellen Glasgow, The Voice of the People, p. 41.

triumphant politician, had a firm foundation, he knew, though others did not. It was his capacity for toil that had made him-- not his intellect, but his ability to persevere-- the power which, in the old days, had successfully carried him through Jerry Pollard's store. As chairman of the Democratic Party, men had called his campaign brilliant. He alone knew the tedious processes, the infinite patience from which these triumphs had evolved-- he alone knew the secret and the security of his success. 38

Ellen Glasgow treated the inaccessible social barriers which separated the new democracy from the aristocracy when she recorded the courtship of Nick and Eugenia Battle. One barrier-- the great disparity in the family backgrounds of the two classes-- is revealed when Eugenia, who is an intelligent and honest aristocrat, chances to meet Nick's father:

As he stood before her, hairy, ominous, uncouth, she realized for the first time the full horror of the fact that he was father to the man she loved. Hitherto, she had but dimly grasped the idea. Nicholas had been associated in her thoughts with the judge and her earlier school days; and she had conceived of his poverty and his people only in the heroic measures that related to his emancipation from them. Now she felt that had she, in the beginning, seen him side by side with his father, she could not have loved him. She flinched from Amos Burr's shaggy exterior and drew back haughtily. 39

The aristocracy's agelong antipathy to the class from which Nick has broken away is evident in the unreasonable attitude of Eugenia's father when speaking to Nick:

"This'll be a busy season for you," he observed cheerfully, in the slightly elevated voice in which he addressed his inferiors. "You'll be cutting your corn before long and seeding your winter crops. What are you planting this fall?"

38 Ibid., p.313.

39 Ibid., p.244.

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The aristocracy's lifelong antipathy to the class from which Nick has broken away is evident in the unresponsible attitude of Eugenia's father when speaking to Nick:

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32 Ibid., p. 213.

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He could not be induced to engage upon social topics with the young man or to allude in the most distant manner to his legal profession. He was a Burr, and a Burr was a small farmer, nothing more.⁴⁰

Not these barriers, but the exaggerated pride of the new democracy and the illogical loyalty of the aristocracy abruptly terminate the love of Nick and Eugenia. When Nick is led to feel that Eugenia believes a malicious rumor accusing him of having seduced the daughter of his former employer, he retaliates by telling her the brutal truth-- that her own brother is the guilty man. In making Eugenia aware of the significance of this incident, Ellen Glasgow indicated the conflicting characteristics of both groups which hampered their union:

Her happiness was dead; this she told herself; telling herself also, that it had not perished by anger or by disbelief. The slayer loomed intangible and yet inevitable-- the shade that had arisen from the gigantic gulf between separate classes which they had sought, in ignorance, to abridge. The pride of Nicholas was not individual, but typical--the pride of caste and it was against this that she had sinned-- not in distrusting his honor, but in offending it. It was in the clash of class, after all, that their theories had crumbled. He might come back to her again-- she might go forth to meet him-- but the bloom had gone from her dreams-- in the reunion she saw neither permanence nor abiding. The strongest of her instincts-- the one that made for the blood she bore-- had quivered beneath the onslaught of his accusation, but had not bent. Whenever and wherever the struggle came she stood, as the Battles had always stood, for the clan. Be it right or wrong, true or false, it was hers and she was on its side. 41

40 Ibid., p. 201.

41 Ibid., p. 244.

44 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Humanism, p. 55.

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Many aspects of the political situation of the transition period are woven into this story. For example, Nick reflects on the calibre of the average representative:

He had gone to Richmond to meet an assembly of statesmen; he had found a body of well-intentioned but unprofitable servants. They were men to be led, this he saw; and as soon as his vision was adjusted he had determined within himself to become their leader. The day when a legislator meant a statesman was done with; it meant merely a man like other men, to be juggled with by shrewder politicians or to be tricked by more dishonest ones. 42

And a method employed in controlling the negro vote is recorded by a representative of the Democratic Party.

"... We have a large negro majority down my way, that obliged us to devise original methods of disposing of it. It was fighting the devil with fire, I suppose; but self-preservation was a law long before Universal Suffrage was heard of. At any rate, I had my hand in it now and then. Once, I remember, on an election day when every darkey in the neighborhood had turned out to vote, I hit on the idea that the man who was to carry the returns across the river should pretend to get drunk and upset the boat. It was a pretty scheme and would have worked all right, but, will you believe it, the blamed fool got drunk in earnest, and when the boat upset he was caught under it and drowned." He paused an instant and complacently added: "But we lost those returns, all the same." 43

Artistic Perspective. "So far as I am aware,"

Ellen Glasgow wrote, "this novel was the first work of genuine realism to appear in Southern fiction." 44 At the time of its publication the outstanding merit of the book was its realism.

42 Ibid., p. 311.

43 Ibid., p. 400.

44 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 62.

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As a youthful author rebelling from sentimental novels, she recorded the surroundings of Richmond with absolute accuracy. "Every house that I mentioned," she attested, "was then standing, every tree, every stone, every brick. Even the pictures in Nicholas Burr's library were actually hanging on the walls of the 'Governor's Mansion' in the Capitol Square."⁴⁵ Such a technique added to the convincement of the story. In her later works, however, the adherence to superficial truth disappeared; for she gradually discovered that ". . . the truth of art and the truth of life are two different truths."⁴⁶

Ben Starr, the "plain man" who symbolizes industrial democracy, tells his own story assuming the role of a participant in the industrial awakening of the new South and a narrator of a changing world. Entering the consciousness of Ben Starr, Ellen Glasgow portrayed his economic, intellectual, and social upgrowth; and at the same time, she interpreted the gallant spirit of the aristocracy and delineated the character qualities necessary for mastering fate.

45 Ibid., p. 63.

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THE ROMANCE OF A PLAIN MAN

(1875-1910)

Philosophic Perspective. The Romance of a Plain Man is the counterpart of The Voice of the People since it deals with the social transition with respect to the urban member of the lower middle class. Explaining the similarity of the two books, Ellen Glasgow wrote, in part:

Whereas in the earlier story, I had dealt with the poorer class from the rural districts, in the present novel I followed the upward way of the workingman in the city. The two books were meant to run a parallel course, from the middle of the eighteen-seventies well into the first decade of the twentieth century. To render a whole society in defeat, it was necessary to deal, not only with outward and inward processes, but even more specifically with both rural and urban communities. 47

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Whereas in the earlier story, I had dealt with the poorer class from the rural districts, in the present novel I followed the upward way of the workman in the city. The two books were meant to run a parallel course, from the middle of the eighteenth century well into the first decade of the twentieth century. To render a whole society in detail, it was necessary to deal, not only with outward and inward processes, but even more specifically with both rural and urban communities. 47

Ben Starr, the "plain man" who symbolizes industrial democracy, tells his own story assuming the role of a participant in the industrial awakening of the new South and a narrator of a changing world. Entering the consciousness of Ben Starr, Ellen Glasgow portrayed his economic, intellectual, and social upgrowth; and at the same time, she interpreted the gallant spirit of the aristocracy and reiterated the character qualities necessary for mastering fate.

The son of a "common workman", Ben Starr begins life in one of the little boxlike frame houses in the Church Hill section of Richmond. After his mother's death and his father's remarriage, Ben runs away from home to go to work. He toils diligently as delivery boy in the Old Market and as newsboy on Franklin Street; then he "mounts the first rung of the ladder" when, after favorably impressing the aristocrat industrialist, General Bolingbroke, he becomes errand boy in the General's tobacco factory.

General Bolingbroke is president of the Great South Midland and Atlantic Railroad, the major railroad system of the South. Constantly expanding in linking together sources of raw materials, factories, and markets, this railroad symbolizes industrial power. To control such power was the ambition of the emerging middle class; thus, as an ultimate goal, Ben aspires after the General's position.

Even as a youthful factory worker, Ben perceives the inevitable struggle between his class and the General's:

In all those weary weeks I had passed General Bolingbroke but once, and by the blank look on his great perspiring face, I saw that my hero had forgotten utterly the incident of my existence. Yet as I turned on the curbing and looked after him, while he plowed, wiping his forehead, up the long hill, under the leaves of mulberry and catalpa trees, I felt instinctively that my future triumphs would be in a measure the overthrow of the things for which he and his generation had stood. The manager's casual phrase, "the old families," had bred in me a secret resentment, for I knew in my heart that the genial aristocracy, represented by the president of the Great South Midland and Atlantic Railroad, was in

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reality the enemy, and not the friend, of such as I. ⁴⁸

Intellectual development was, of course, essential for the advancement of the new democracy. After the war when doors which were formerly closed to the workman opened, the average laborer placed great emphasis on the importance of an education. Such an evaluation of knowledge is voiced by Ben's older brother:

"But speakin' of an eddication, you see I never had one either, an' I tell you, when you don't have it, you miss it every blessed minute of yo' life. Whenever I see a man step on ahead of me in the race, I say to myself, 'Thar goes an eddication. It's the eddication in him that's a-movin' an' not the man! You mark my words, Benjy, I've stood stock still an' seen 'em stridin' on that didn't have one bloomin' thing inside of 'em except an eddication.'" ⁴⁹

Pathetically in earnest, Ben follows his brother's advice by attempting to learn by heart the definitions of all the words in Johnson's Dictionary. By the time he had committed to memory the words beginning with a, b, c, and d, the General hears of his unique approach to culture and arranges for Ben to attend school.

Like Nick Burr, Ben falls in love with a member of the aristocracy. Although Sally Mickelborough returns Ben's love and promises to marry him, her two maiden aunts with whom she makes her home are horrified at the thought of a descendant of the Fairfaxes and Blands marrying the son of a "common laborer." The reaction of the progressing middle class to the aristocracy's intolerance of them is disclosed

⁴⁸ Ellen Glasgow, The Romance of a Plain Man, p. 108.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

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 class to the aristocracy's intolerance of them is disclosed

48 First Chapter, The Sonnets of a Plain Man, p. 108.
 49 Ibid., p. 111.

when Ben senses that he is an unwelcome guest in Sally's home:

. . . I knew that I ought to have declined the invitation Sally had given. A sense of outrage-- of resentment-- swelled hot and strong in my heart. What was this social barrier-- this aristocratic standard that could accept the General and reject such men as I ? If it had sprung back, strong and flexible as a steel wire, before the man, would it still present its irresistible strength against the power of money ? In that instant I resolved that if wealth alone could triumph over it, wealth should become the weapon of my attack. 50

Wealth, however, fails to triumph over the ancient class barriers. Although Ben becomes the General's assistant and amasses a large fortune through hard endeavor and single-mindedness, Miss Mitty and Miss Matoaca, Sally's aunts, do not consider his social position bettered. In their opinion, neither wealth nor character can atone for the absence "of the qualities which come from refined birth and breeding." 51

In Sally Mickelborough, Ellen Glasgow embodied a spirit of gallantry which she felt was native to the aristocracy. Sally's inherent courage, which is sustained by blitheness and graciousness, proves as adequate in defying circumstances as Ben's earnest determination and resolute endurance. A financial panic and unsuccessful investments leave Ben and Sally penniless. After the death of their infant son, Ben becomes seriously ill; and Sally is forced

50 Ibid., p. 167.

51 Ibid., p.203.

to carry on alone. Refusing the assistance of her wealthy friends, she supports her husband and herself by laundering fine laces and making desserts.

Ben becomes aware of the power of a gay and gallant spirit in overcoming fate as he overhears his wife laughing with George Bolingbroke about delivering "the day's washing":

This humor, this lightness, and above all this gallantry, which was so much a part of the older civilization to which they belonged, wrought upon my disordered nerves with a feeling of anger. Here, at last, I had run against that "something else" of the Blands', apart from wealth, apart from position, apart even from blood, of which the General had spoken. Miss Mitty might go in rags and do her own cooking, he had said, but as long as she possessed this "something else", that supported her, she would preserve to the end, in defiance of circumstances, her terrible importance. 52

The Romance of a Plain Man and The Voice of the People deal more directly than the other Novels of the Commonwealth with Ellen Glasgow's major theme, the rise of the middle class to the dominating position in Southern democracy. To Ellen Glasgow the careers of Ben Starr and Nick Burr were neither exceptional nor unusual. Each was a representative of the new democracy that forged ahead when the social upheaval presented the opportunity.

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held "almost insurmountable disadvantages," she allowed Ben Starr to tell his own story because the novel had first appeared to her in that form.

As a result of this method of presentation, she noted that, although as Ben grows up his image becomes vague, his impressions of the changing South gain in actuality. The naiveté of Ben as a child keeps him alive and valid; however, when his more mature mind explains and analyzes the changing scene around him, his own figure loses vitality. She also felt that her handling of Ben Starr was effective in "lending a sharper edge, and occasionally an ironic tone,"⁵⁴ to the story. The male ego of the emerging middle class is treated more or less ironically when Ben earnestly reiterates his belief that he can hold Sally's love by surrounding her with the luxuries derived from wealth.

Then, too, Ellen Glasgow's criticism of the aristocracy's sentimentality is apparent; for example, Ben records the General's comment on one of his teachers:

" . . . Taught us English history, then Virginia history. As for the rest of America, she used to say it didn't have a history, merely a past. Mentioned the Boston tea party once by mistake, and had to explain that that was an incident, not history. . . . "55

53 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 70.

54 Ibid., p. 71.

55 Ellen Glasgow, The Romance of a Plain Man, p. 380.

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53 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 70.

54 Ibid., p. 71.

55 Ellen Glasgow, The Romance of a Plain Man, p. 360.

Occasionally the criticism is blended with pathos.

On one occasion Ben reflects on the contradictory convictions of Miss Matoaca, who is an aristocratic suffragette:

I was for the hard, bright world and the future; there in that cedar-scented room, sat the two ladies, forever guarding the faded furniture and the crumbling past. The pathetic contradiction of Miss Matoaca, who worked for the emancipation of women, while she herself was the slave of an ancestry of men who oppressed women, and women who loved oppression! Miss Matoaca, whose mind, long and narrow like her face, could grasp but a single idea and reject the sequence to which it inevitably led! I wondered if she meant to emancipate 'ladies' merely, or if her principles could possibly overleap her birthright of caste? Was she a gallant martyr to the inequalities of sex, who still clung, trembling, to the inequalities of society? She would go to the stake, I felt sure, for the cause of womanhood, but she'd go supported by the serene conviction that she was 'a lady.' The pathos of it, and the mockery, checked the laugh in my throat. 56

Ellen Glasgow continued:

I never heard her actual name; yet when she returned, by and by, to haunt my imagination for years, she brought with her her own unalterable name and story. I knew her life as well as if I had lived it in her place, hour by hour, day by day, week by week; and gradually, I found that her image was blending in contour with the figures of several women I had known well in the past. From the first paragraph in my novel, there was never the faintest hint of obscurity in that long perspective. . . . From the moment when I passed her living figure on the street, and then lost it, she came and went in my mind through an atmosphere of inevitability. 56

Thus, Virginia Pendleton came into being, and the story of her life became the medium for Ellen Glasgow's "long per-

56 Ibid., p. 206.

57 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 78.

58 Ibid., p. 78.

Occasionally the criticism is blended with praise.

On one occasion Ben reflects on the contradictory convictions

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VIRGINIA

(1884-1912)

Philosophic Perspective. Virginia is an unbiased portrait of a now extinct pattern of a Southern gentle-woman. The idea for this novel originated from the casual remark of one of Ellen Glasgow's friends when the two women, while walking along the street in an old aristocratic town of their Commonwealth passed a middle-aged lady. "As she went by," Ellen Glasgow recalled, "my friend glanced after her and sighed softly, 'How lovely she must once have been !'" 57

Explaining the significance of the unknown passer-by, Ellen Glasgow continued:

I never heard her actual name; yet when she returned, by and by, to haunt my imagination for years, she brought with her her own unalterable name and story. I knew her life as well as if I had lived it in her place, hour by hour, day by day, week by week; and gradually, I found that her image was blending in contour with the figures of several women I had known well in the past. From the first paragraph in my novel, there was never the faintest haze or obscurity in that long perspective. . . . From the moment when I passed her living figure on the street, and then lost it, she came and went in my mind through an atmosphere of inevitability. 58

Thus, Virginia Pendleton came into being, and the story of her life became the medium for Ellen Glasgow's "long perspective."

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Thus, Virginia Pendleton came into being, and the story of her life became the medium for Ellen Glasgow's "long perspective."

Because the Southern aristocratic tradition was the conditioning factor in the life of the gentlewoman of that period, this novel, primarily, is Ellen Glasgow's interpretation of that tradition, in relation to the woman whom it controlled. Beyond the prose surface, however, and from a more universal angle of vision, Ellen Glasgow treated of the "eternal warfare of the dream with the reality";⁵⁹ of time, as man's arch-antagonist; and of the pathos of life which is worse than the tragedy.

Southern tradition dictated that Virginia Pendleton be prepared for life according to those principles from which Ellen Glasgow herself so determinedly revolted. Virginia's education, which was based on the theory that the less she knew about life, the better prepared she would be for it, consisted of deadening her reasoning faculties, of teaching her the art of evading reality, and of funneling the resources of her heart and mind into an illogical and exaggerated sense of duty to her husband and her children.

Virginia was educated at the Dinwiddie Academy for Young Ladies where the "strangle-hold on the intellect"⁶⁰ began:

To solidify the forces of mind into the inherited mould of fixed beliefs was, in the opinion of the age, to achieve the definite end of all education. When

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 89. *Virginia*, p. 80.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

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59 Ibid., p. 89.

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the child ceased to wonder before the veil of appearances, the battle of orthodoxy with speculation was over, and Miss Priscilla felt that she could rest on her victory. 61

The process of reasoning was replaced by that "evasive idealism," which flourished so extensively in Southern life and literature, and which Ellen Glasgow's inquiring mind deplored. From Miss Priscilla Batte, Virginia's teacher, and from her parents, Virginia learned to avoid the unpleasant realities of life. Her father's mental reaction to any unpleasant truth is a perfect example of "evasive idealism":

He had never in his life seen things as they are because he had seen them always by the white flame of a soul on fire with righteousness. To reach his mind, impressions of persons or objects had first to pass through a refining atmosphere in which all baser substances were destroyed, and no fact had ever penetrated this medium except in the flattering disguise of a sentiment. Having married at twenty an idealist only less ignorant of the world than himself, he had immediately devoted his gifts to embellishing the actuality. Both cherished the conviction that to acknowledge an evil is in a manner to countenance its existence, and both clung fervently to the belief that a pretty sham has a more intimate relation to morality than has an ugly truth. 62

By the time Virginia Pendleton is twenty, she has been molded into the feminine ideal of the ages, and "to look at her is to think inevitably of love."⁶³ Though synonymous conceptions of happiness, love, and life itself have been absorbed by her mind and her emotions, the "tyranny of tradition" dictates that she remain always passive. For one

61 Ellen Glasgow, Virginia, p. 20.

62 Ibid., p. 31.

63 Ibid., p. 5.

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81 Ellen Glasgow, Virginia, p. 80.

82 Ibid., p. 81.

83 Ibid., p. 8.

brief moment of illumination, while she watches Oliver Treadwell, with whom she is falling in love, dance with another girl, she is aware of this tyranny:

Suspense ! Was that a woman's life, after all ? Never to be able to go out and fight for what one wanted ! Always to sit at home and wait, without moving a foot or lifting a hand toward happiness ! Never to dare gallantly ! Never even to suffer openly ! Always to will in secret, always to hope in secret, always to triumph or to fail in secret. Never to be one's self; never to let one's soul or body relax from the attitude of expectancy into the attitude of achievement. For the first time, born of the mutinous longing in her heart, there came to her the tragic vision of life. The faces of the girls revolving in white muslin to the music of the waltz, became merged into one, and this was the face of all womanhood. Love, sorrow, hope, regret, wonder, all the sharp longing and the slow waiting of the centuries-- above all the slow waiting-- these things were in her brief vision of the single face that looked back at her out of the whirling dance. 64

After Virginia marries Oliver, her love for him and later for their three children is expressed by self-effacement and self-sacrifice. The simple goodness of her heart, upheld by the precepts of tradition and the example of other women, leaves no doubt in her mind that it is the woman's duty to sacrifice herself. In time, however, Virginia becomes the innocent victim of her own goodness. Her children, who are products of the modern colleges of a new era, quickly grow beyond her intellectual reach; and her husband, who has become a successful playwright, finds Virginia insufficient for mature companionship.

64 Ibid., pp.138-139.

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Throughout Virginia's life the results of her conditioning are apparent. Even in the crisis of her life, which comes when she learns that Margaret Oldcastle, a beautiful and successful actress, has become her husband's mistress, Virginia cannot lay down the manner of a lady. She visits Margaret Oldcastle at her New York apartment, but she is unable to speak of Margaret's relationship with her husband.

She had let the chance go by, she had failed in her errand, yet she knew that, even though it cost her her life, even though it cost her a thing far dearer than life, her happiness, she could not have done otherwise. In the crucial moment it was principle and not passion that she obeyed; but this principle, filtering down through generations, had become so inseparable from the sources of character, that it had passed at last through the intellect into the blood. She could no more have bared her soul to that other woman than she could have stripped her body naked in the marketplace. 65

Later, when a letter from Oliver arrives, in which he begs Virginia for his freedom, she flings the half-read note into the fire. This impulsive gesture, as Ellen Glasgow noted, was Virginia's last resort in evading an unpleasant reality:

Though she (Virginia) did not realize it, this passionate refusal to look at or to touch the thing that she hated, was the last stand of the Pendleton idealism against the triumph of the actuality. It is possible that until that moment she had felt far down in her soul that by declining to acknowledge in words the fact of Oliver's desertion, by hiding it from the children, by ignoring the processes which would lead to his freedom, she had in some obscure way, deprived that fact of all power over her life. 66

65 Ibid., p. 443.

66 Ibid., p. 459.

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To Ellen Glasgow, the tragedy of Virginia's life which was caused by the conflict between tradition and the actualities, was a part of a larger conflict--"the eternal warfare between the dream and the reality."⁶⁷ The pattern of a lady to which Virginia so perfectly conformed, was, Ellen Glasgow claimed, a universal dream-image, created by man and embodying "the thwarted human longing for the beautiful and the good."⁶⁸

In Oliver's career, as a dramatist, this struggle between the dreams of man and the realities of life is repeated. Oliver, the young idealist, is ready to sacrifice everything for his art, as he passionately declares to his cousin Susan:

"I'm tired-- dog-tired of compromise and commercialism and all the rest of it. I've got something to say to the world, and I'll go out and make my bed in the gutter before I'll forfeit the opportunity of saying it. Do you know what that means, Susan? Do you know what it is to be willing to give your life if only you can speak out the thing that is inside of you?"⁶⁹

But a year later, after he marries Virginia, he finds it necessary to accept a position in a railroad office to earn enough money to support his wife. Then, when his first play fails on Broadway, he discovers that the general public is not interested in the truth he so earnestly desires to express. Only by compromising with their standards can

⁶⁷ Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 89.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 96. A Certain Measure, p. 90.

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67 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 89.

68 Ibid., p. 96.

69 Ellen Glasgow, Virginia, p. 9.

the security and comfort, which his family demands and to which he himself is not immune, be acquired. Slowly, his early dreams fade; and fifteen years later he is described in the following words:

At forty, he was a handsomer man than he had been at twenty-five, yet, in spite of this, some virtue had gone out of him-- here, too, as in life, "something was missing." The generous impulses, the high heart for adventure, the enthusiasm of youth, and youth's white rage for perfection-- where were these? It was as if a rough hand had passed over him, coarsening here, blotting out there, accentuating elsewhere. The slow, insidious devil of compromise had done its work. Once he had made one of that small band of fighters, who fight not for advantage but for the truth; now he stood in that little place with the safe majority who are "neither for God nor for His enemies." Life had done this to him-- life and Virginia. 70

Ellen Glasgow intended that in this novel, as in life, time would play the role of arch-antagonist. Discussing the tragic outcome of Virginia's marriage, she wrote: "Among women, ancient or modern, such a lot is far from uncommon. But, in my narrative, there is always time, the arch-antagonist pursuing, engulfing, and finally breaking down her resistance to Fate."⁷¹ As the years wash over Virginia, time erases her loveliness, her ardent expectancy, the dependence of her children, and the desires of her husband; while, in the universe beyond, time is bearing down on the pattern of womanhood which she represents.

70 Ibid., p. 368.

71 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 90.

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70 Ibid., p. 368.

71 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 80.

The sympathetic understanding and compassion in her treatment of Virginia revealed Ellen Glasgow's conviction⁷² that "the pathos of life is worse than the tragedy." The pathos of Virginia's life lies in the fact that she is not a weak character. Like Ellen Glasgow's own mother, Virginia was, Ellen Glasgow stated, "the logical result of an inordinate sense of duty, the crowning achievement of the code of beautiful behavior and of the Episcopal Church."⁷³

Artistic Perspective. The "atmosphere of inevitability," which surrounded the life of Virginia Pendleton, as it unfolded in her imagination, was repeated when Ellen Glasgow began the actual writing of her story. "Throughout this novel," she wrote, "I was possessed, or so I thought at the time, by that pre-established harmony between material and medium which is the one unqualified reward in the pursuit of a difficult craft."⁷⁴

Within this novel the skillful employment of certain techniques reveals Ellen Glasgow's growth as a literary craftsman. Particularly worthy of note are the witticisms and epigrams that highlight characterizations and descriptions; the psychological analysis of motives and actions; and the artistic presentation of "daring" realism.

72 Ibid., p. 90. *Virginia*, p. 11.

73 Ibid., p. 83.

74 Ibid., p. 94.

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73 Ibid., p. 83.

74 Ibid., p. 94.

To understand Virginia it was of course essential that the reader understand the background which had made her and with which her life was so closely interwoven. For this reason, the people of Dinwiddie are as convincingly drawn as Virginia herself. They and their town quickly come to life when epigrams with ironic overtones become the medium of expression.

For example, the reader can evaluate the quality of Virginia's education when Miss Priscilla, Virginia's teacher, is described in these words:

Just as the town had battled for a principle without understanding it, so she was capable of dying for an idea, but not of conceiving it. 75

Mrs. Pendleton's "evasive idealism" is clearly established when a description of her ends on this ironic note:

. . . for her heart was so sensitive to pain that she could exist at all only by inventing a world of exquisite fiction around her. 76

James Treadwell, the young financier of Dinwiddie, is aptly described:

Since he had never loved anything with passion except money, he was regarded by his neighbors as a man of unimpeachable morality. 77

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75 Ellen Glasgow, Virginia, p. 11.

76 Ibid., p. 61.

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modern theories in psychology was in advance of the period in which she was writing. In her attempt to present an unbiased portrait of the Southern gentlewoman, she sometimes paused to analyze Virginia from a psychological point of view. In one instance, she dissected Virginia's "unselfishness" :

From the day of her marriage she had spoiled him because spoiling him had been for her own happiness as well as for his. She had yielded to him since her chief desire had been simply to yield and to satisfy. Her unselfishness had been merely selfishness cloaked in the familiar aspects of duty. 78

At another point in the story, Virginia's irresistible desire to buy material^a for a new dress in an effort to recapture her husband's waning interest is scrutinized:

In the flickering motive that guided her as she entered the shop, one would scarcely have recognized the lusty impulse that had sent her ancestors on splendid rambles of knight-errantry; yet its hidden source was the same. The simple purchase of twelve yards of blue silk that she had wanted for weeks ! To an outsider it would have appeared a small matter; yet in the act there was the intrepid struggle of a personal will to enforce its desire upon destiny. 79

Ellen Glasgow's artistry in presenting a delicate subject without bearing down on it, is revealed in the incident of Cyrus Treadwell and the colored washerwoman. To Ellen Glasgow the episode was merely an instance of subordinating "sentimentality to veracity in Southern fiction."⁸⁰ One critic, however, labelled her treatment of Cyrus and Mandy as "the first note of 'daring' realism in Southern fiction."⁸¹

78 Ibid., p. 311.

79 Ibid., p. 291.

80 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 88.

81 Loc. cit.

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other part of the Southern Review, the reviewer
sought to analyze Wright from a psychological point of view.
In one instance, she discussed Wright's "moral blindness":

From the fact of her marriage she had rejected him
because she thought him had been for her own happiness
as well as for his. She had yielded to him since her
chief desire had been simply to yield and to satisfy
her weakness, and had been merely self-interests of which
in the further aspects of duty.

At another point in the story, Wright's "moral blindness"
is again pointed out. It is now shown in an effort to ex-
plain her "moral blindness" that she is described as:

...the "moral blindness" that killed her as she
entered the story, and which she never recovered from.
The lady looked at her and said the story was
really a tragedy of "moral blindness"; and the woman
was the same. "A moral blindness of which
she was blind that she had lived for weeks!
No one outside of her would have known of a man's
yet in the end there was the tragedy of a man's
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The incident takes place on the back porch of the Treadwell home where Cyrus Treadwell, Dinwiddie's wealthiest citizen, is chatting with Mandy, the negro washerwoman. Cyrus casually recalls the year Mandy worked as a servant in the Treadwell home. Then Mandy's reaction is described:

For the first time a look of cunning, of the pathetic cunning of a child pitted against a man, awoke in her face.

"En Miss Lindy sent me off befo' de year was up, Marster. My boy Jubal was born de mont' atter she Tw'n me out." She hesitated a minute, and then added, with a kind of savage coquetry, "I 'uz a moughty likely gal, Marster. You ain't done furgit dat, is you?"

Her words touched Cyrus like the flick of a whip on a sore, and he drew back quickly while his thin lips grew tight.

"You'd better take that basket into the house," he said sharply. 82

Rebuffed by his harshness, Mandy says she did not mean anything; she merely thought that he might be willing to give her "fo' dollars a mont' fur de washin'." Cyrus declares he will give her not a cent more. After Mandy has left, he calls her request an attempt to blackmail him; and the episode ends with a deft touch of irony, when

Taking down his hat, Cyrus turned away from her, and descended the steps. "I'll look up Henry's son (Oliver, Cyrus' nephew) before supper," he was thinking. "Even if the boy's a fool, I'm not one to let those of my own blood come to want." 83

82 Ellen Glasgow, Virginia, pp. 156-157.

83 Ibid., p. 158. A Certain Measure, p. 97.

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LIFE AND GABRIELLA

(1894-1912)

Philosophic Perspective. Life and Gabriella is Ellen Glasgow's portrait of a woman as a reality. In direct contrast to Virginia Pendleton, Gabriella Carr was the symbol, Ellen Glasgow said, "of an advancing economic order."⁸⁴

As records of social history, both Virginia and Life and Gabriella depict characteristic stages of Southern culture, concerning which Ellen Glasgow wrote:

In the middle 'eighties, when Virginia grew to womanhood, the past order still lingered on as a state of mind; and the Southern woman, who had borne the heaviest burden of the old slavery and the new freedom, was valued in sentiment, chiefly as an ornament to civilization, and as a restraining influence over the nature of man. But the next decade was scarcely over when one of those momentous revolutions of opinion, more drastic in the end than any revolution of facts or of institutions, had already begun. . . . Even in the feminine sphere was self-assertion, somewhat gradually but beneficently, displacing self-sacrifice. Sentimentality, both as a rule of conduct and as a habit of mind, was yielding to the more practical, and more profitable, virtues of common sense.⁸⁵

Representing this advancement in the development of Southern womanhood, Gabriella Carr achieves success and happiness by employing an approach to life which Ellen Glasgow firmly believed every woman must possess in order to escape the "tyranny of tradition." Gabriella overcomes

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hardship and disillusionment by facing reality and by acting in accordance with that reality; and life yields its measure of happiness to her because she holds herself, not circumstances responsible for her destiny.

Gabriella's pattern of living is first revealed when, as a young girl, she refuses to leave the front parlor of her home where her widowed mother and elderly cousins are discussing what is to be done with "poor Jane," Gabriella's older sister, who has left her husband. Facing Jane's problem with frankness and sincerity of purpose, Gabriella voices an unheard-of plan of action. She will go to work as a sales girl in order to support herself, so that her mother and cousins may care for Jane and Jane's children.

This unconventional proposal is most disturbing to Gabriella's relatives, whose chief obligation in life is "keeping up appearances." When cousin Pussy suggests that Gabriella find some type of work which would be more in keeping with her "station of life," Gabriella makes a bold announcement:

"If you mean that you'd rather I'd work button-holes or crochet mats than go into a store and earn a salary, then I can't do it. . . . I'd rather die than be dependent all my life, and I'm going to earn my living if I have to break rocks to do it." 86

Action, not the patient, hopeless waiting that tradition decreed, follows Gabriella's declaration; and almost

86 Ellen Glasgow, Life and Gabriella, p. 29.

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immediately, she becomes a millinery clerk in a local store. Throughout her life, this method of escaping defeat by facing the actualities and acting intelligently is repeated.

A few years later Gabriella marries, and makes her home in New York City. When her husband's weakness of fibre becomes apparent, and when he finally deserts her and their two children, Gabriella is not overcome; nor does she return to her native Virginia. Rather, she remains in New York City; and with the assistance of Miss Polly, another Virginian in exile, she creates a new home for her children by going to work for Madame Dinard, a fashionable modiste.

Hardened, but undefeated, by the utter disillusionment of her marriage, Gabriella realizes that love alone is not the ultimate fulfillment of a woman's life; and she asks herself:

"What is there left in life ? What is the thing that really counts, after all ? What is the possession that makes all the striving worth while in the end ? At twenty-seven love is over for me, and if love is over, what remains to fill the rest of my life ? There must be something else-- there must be a reality somewhere which is truer, which is profounder, than love." 87

During the next ten years, Gabriella finds satisfaction and happiness in her work and in her children. Her successful career in the house of Dinard and her personal contentment are due, in no small measure, to the following dynamic principle of her philosophy:

"Nobody, except myself, is ever going to make me happy";

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. . . I want to be happy. I have a right to be happy, but it depends on myself." 88

In the closing chapter of this novel, the "tyranny of tradition" receives a deadly blow when feminine self-assertion replaces passivism in an affair of the heart. Realizing that she is in love with Ben O'Hara, a self-made Irishman, Gabriella follows him to the railroad station where he is about to board a train for the West; and there she makes her love for him known. Gabriella's action, which symbolizes the vital feminine spirit of a new order, receives the following comment from Ellen Glasgow:

Yet in that instant, as in every crisis of her life, she turned instinctively to action, to movement, to exertion, however futile. While she walked across the pavement to the waiting cab for the crowning and ultimate choice of her life, she abandoned forever the authority and guidance of tradition. Tradition, she knew bade her sit and wait on destiny until she withered, like Arthur, to the vital core of her nature; but something which she shared with the swarming multitude of children in the street-- the will to live, to strive, and to conquer-- this had risen superior to the empty rules of the past. With her hand on the door of the taxicab she spoke rapidly to the driver: "Drive back to the station as fast as you can, there is not a minute to lose." 89

So, without the illusions of tradition, without strong religious convictions, and without any unusual endowment of beauty or intellect, Gabriella forces life to yield to her happiness and satisfaction, just as, Ellen Glasgow believed, any woman of reality might.

88 Ibid., p. 334.

89 Ibid., p. 526.

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Artistic Perspective. Despite the positive nature of this novel, its companion study of Southern womanhood, Virginia, remains the more memorable book. Life and Gabriella lacks the "pre-established harmony between medium and mode" which characterizes the artistic merit of Virginia. Worthy of mention, however, are the realistic descriptions of New York City and the use of a restricted point of view, since both add to the convincement of the novel.

Commenting generally on the change in her approach to fiction, Ellen Glasgow stated that not until she began to write Barren Ground was she able to orient herself and to respond to a new creative impulse. "All that came after this period," she continued, "was the result of this heightened consciousness and this altered perspective."

Her newer way of writing, which was the result of her long apprenticeship to life and to the art of fiction, is marked by a sharper break from tradition and convention; by a deeper penetration into experience; and by a further probing of, not character alone but the very essence of

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CHAPTER III
NOVELS OF THE COUNTRY

The Novels of the Country comprise three volumes, the scenes of which are laid in separate rural districts of Virginia. The first of these novels, The Miller of Old Church, which was published in 1911, belongs to Ellen Glasgow's "earlier manner" of writing. The two remaining novels of the series and the four Novels of the City, however, were written in a fashion which their author called "my¹ later way of writing."

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1 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 122.

2 Id.

being. For although these later books continue to record Southern social history, the emphasis lies less on local culture than on the spirit of life itself.

THE MILLER OF OLD CHURCH

(1892-1902)

Philosophic Perspective. Though The Miller of Old Church takes place in a later period and in a different rural section of Virginia, its major theme is similar to that of The Deliverance, since both novels deal with the effects of the Reconstruction and the social transition.

In The Miller of Old Church Ellen Glasgow scrutinized the decline of the aristocratic stock, with emphasis on their disintegration of character and their loss of spirit; and she illustrated the strength of the plain countryman in the rising new democracy. Like The Deliverance, her interpretation is achieved chiefly through symbolic implication.

The story is woven around Mrs. Gay, a soft and clinging, professional invalid, who dominates "not by force but by sentiment."³ Mrs. Gay embodies the aristocratic tradition; and like that tradition, in attempting to block change, she brings tragedy upon those whose lives she controls.

³ Ellen Glasgow, The Miller of Old Church, p. 72.

being. For although these later books continue to record Southern social history, the emphasis lies less on local culture than on the spirit of life itself.

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professional invalid, who dominates "not by force but by sentiment." Mrs. Gay embodies the aristocratic tradition; and like that tradition, in attempting to block change, she brings tragedy upon those whose lives she controls.

As a young woman, she obstructed the legitimate mingling of the social orders by preventing her brother, Jonathan Jordan, from marrying Janet Merryweather, the daughter of the overseer of their estate. The estrangement resulted in stark tragedy when Jonathan was murdered as Janet's betrayer by Abner Revercomb, a local farmer, who also loved Janet.

Twenty years later, Mrs. Gay's weakness controls her son's life. Fear of impairing the delicate state of his mother's health forces Jonathan Gay to keep secret his marriage to Blossom Revercomb, Abner's daughter. His deception causes his death; for he is shot by Blossom's father, who believes that Jonathan has betrayed his daughter. Thus, Jonathan represents the declining fibre of the aristocracy, which lacked the courage to make an open break with the social barriers of the past. And his sentimental loyalty to his mother, like the aristocracy's allegiance to an outmoded tradition, results in catastrophe. This is made clear when his cousin Molly traces the cause of Jonathan's tragic death:

And then she thought of the son who had drifted into deceit and subterfuge because he was not strong enough to make war on a thing so helpless. He, also, had died because he dared not throw off that remorseless tyranny of weakness. Without that soft yet indomitable influence, he would never have lied in the beginning, would never have covered his faithlessness with the hypocrisy of duty. 4

4 Ibid., p. 426.

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Molly Merryweather, the illegitimate daughter of Jonathan Jordan and Janet Merryweather, represents the mingling of the social orders. Molly's decision to live among her mother's people as the miller's wife, rather than continue to accept the provisions of her father's will by remaining with Mrs. Gay and enjoying the luxuries of wealth and society, manifests Ellen Glasgow's endorsement of the superiority of the new democracy over the old aristocracy.

In Abel Revercomb, the miller of Old Church, Ellen Glasgow portrayed the plain countryman who, after the Reconstruction period, utilized his meager resources and pushed ahead with the times. His rise is summarized by his neighbor, Solomon Hatch, who says of him:

" . . . Abel went to school somehow by hook or crook an' got a good bit of book larnin', they say, an' then he came back here an' went to turnin' up every stone an' stick on the place. He ploughed an' he sowed an' he reaped till he'd saved up enough to buy that piece of low ground betwixt his house and the grist-mill. Then Ebenezer Timberlake died of the dropsy, an' the first thing folks knew, Abel had moved over and turned miller. All the grain that's raised about here now goes to his mill, an' they say he'll be throwin' out the old and puttin' in new-fangled machinery before the year is up. He's the foremost man in these parts. . . ."⁵

Among the characters of Ellen Glasgow's earlier novels, Abel Revercomb can be classed with Ben Starr, Nick Burr, and Gabriella Carr, since all are variations of their species whose resources of character and physical stamina

⁵ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

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gave them the power to rebel from the past and advance with a new era. This group of characters evidences the influence of Origin of the Species on the novels in which they appear.

Artistic Perspective. In creating the background of The Miller of Old Church, Ellen Glasgow's artistry, in recording the full-flavored humor and acute discernment of the Virginian country folk, is noteworthy. For example, old Adam Doolittle tells Solomon Hatch how he "confounded" Mr. Mullen, the new minister:

"Have you marked how skeery Mr. Mullen has growed about meetin' my eyes over the rail of the pulpit? Why, 'twas only yesterday that I brought my guns to bear on the resurrection of the body, an' blowed it to atoms in his presence. 'Now thar's Reuben Merryweather who buried one leg at Manassas, Mr. Mullen,' I said as pleasant an' natchel as if I warn't about to confound him, 'an' what I'd like to have made clear and easy to me, suh, is what use the Almighty is goin' to make of that odd leg on the Day of Jedgment? Will he add a new one onto Reuben? I axed, 'when as plain as logic will have it, it won't be a resurrection, but a creation, or will he start that leg a-trampin' by itself all the way from Manassas to jine the other at Old Church?' The parson had been holdin' pretty free all the mornin' with nobody daring to contradict him, and a man more taken aback by the power of logic my sight never lit on. 'Spare me, Mr. Doolittle,' was all he said, never a word mo'. 'Spare me, Mr. Doolittle.'" 6

And Reuben Merryweather's wisdom is typical, as he scrutinized the religious differences of Sarah Revercomb and her son:

"... They're both bent on doin' the Lord's job

6 Ibid., pp.12-13.

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"Have you marked how sneaky Mr. Miller has grown about meeting my eyes over the rail of the pulpit? Why, 'twas only yesterday that I brought my arms to bear on the resurrection of the body, and showed it to atoms in his presence. 'Now that's Reuben Merryweather who buried ~~another~~ at Kansas, Mr. Miller,' I said as pleasant as I could. 'I want to confound him, and what I'd like to have made clear and easy to me, and, is what was the Almighty's point to make of that odd leg on the Day of Judgment? Will he add a new one onto Reuben? I asked, 'When as plain as logic will have it, it won't be a resurrection, but a creation, or will he start that leg a-trumpin' by itself all the way from Kansas to join the other at Old Church?' The person had been holding pretty free all the morning with nobody daring to contradict him, and a man more taken aback by the power of logic my sight never lit on. 'Spare me, Mr. Doolittle,' was all he said, never a word more. 'Spare me, Mr. Doolittle.'" 6

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over again an' doin' it better, an' thar manner of goin' to work would be to melt up human natur an' pour it all into the same pattern. It ain't never entered Sarah's head that you can't fit the same religion to every man any mo' than you can the same pair of breeches and the little man takes the small ones, an' it's jest the same with religion. It may be cut after one pattern, but it's mighty apt to get its shape from the wearer inside. Why, thar ain't any text so peaceable that it ain't drawn blood from somebody." 7

BARREN GROUND

(1894-1924)

Philosophic Perspective. "If I might select one of my books for the double-edged blessing of immortality," Ellen Glasgow wrote, "that book would be, I think, Barren Ground." 8 Most highly esteemed in Ellen Glasgow's own opinion, Barren Ground is considered by most critics to be her masterpiece and the most deeply felt of her novels. To Ellen Glasgow, the book was, as she has said, "almost a vehicle of liberation," 9 since it marked the beginning of alterations in her perspective and a new manner of creation.

Barren Ground is the story of Dorinda Oakley, whose character created her destiny, and who, like Ellen Glasgow herself, learned to live without joy. The "one dominant meaning" of the novel, Ellen Glasgow noted, is that "character is fate"; 10 and the "implicit philosophy," she added, "may be Ibid., pp.216-217.

8 Ellen Glasgow, Barren Ground, p. vii.

9 Loc. cit.

10 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 154.

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summed up in a phrase; one may learn to live, one may even learn to live gallantly, without delight."¹¹

In telling the story of Dorinda's life, Ellen Glasgow examined the declining strain of the Virginia pioneer stock, and recorded a victory of character over fate; moreover, she pictured the kinship between man and the soil, and she portrayed time and "the spirit of place"¹² as dominant influences on the life of man.

From her observations, Ellen Glasgow saw that the descendants of the hardy pioneers, who had conquered the wilderness of Virginia, appeared to have outlived their usefulness; and time was discarding them. After the war, the Reconstruction, and the animosity of nature had drained the vitality from the people and the land alike, the instinct for survival appeared to exist only as a negative quality; and defending themselves from the land had become the only expression of their will to live.

Such an atmosphere of futility and hopeless resignation is reproduced in Barren Ground wherever Dorinda's mother and father are depicted. For example, Joshua Oakley, Dorinda's father, whose life contained nothing but ineffectual labor,

11 Ibid., p. 155.

12 Ibid., p. 154.

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11 Ibid., p. 155.

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appears to his daughter in the following way :

Though he was not yet sixty-five, his features, browned and reddened and seamed by sun and wind, appeared as old as a rock embedded in earth. All his life he had been a slave to the land, harnessed to the elemental forces, struggling inarticulately against the blight of poverty and the barrenness of the soil. Yet Dorinda had never heard him rebel. His resignation was the earth's passive acceptance of sun or rain. When his crop failed, or his tobacco was destroyed by frost, he would drive his plough into the field and begin all over again. ¹³

And so all-pervading is the surrender to circumstances that, at twenty, Dorinda herself feels the apparent inflexibility of her destiny:

The day had begun. It was like every other day in the past. It would be like every other day in the future. Suddenly the feeling came over her that she was caught like a mouse in the trap of life. No matter how desperately she struggled, she could never escape; she could never be free. She was held ¹⁴ fast by circumstances as by invisible wires of steel.

But gaining strength from adversity, Dorinda's will to live becomes a positive force; and she triumphs over circumstances because a "vein of iron" runs through her soul.

When Dorinda learns that Jason Greylock has betrayed her, bitter hate and thirst for revenge so overwhelm her mind and heart that she makes an unmeditated and unsuccessful attempt to kill him. Then, a short time later, she begins to feel the strength of her "essential self":

Deep down in her, beneath the rough texture of

¹³ Ellen Glasgow, Barren Ground, p. 40.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

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When fortune turned her back, she turned her face
her, bitter hate and faith, her revenge on overbearing fate
and meant that she never to be defeated and unsuccessful
attempts to kill him. "One day, a short time later, she began to
feel the strength of her love and said:

Deep down in her, beneath the tough texture of

experience, her essential self was still superior to her folly and ignorance, was superior even to the conspiracy of circumstances that hemmed her in. And she felt that in a little while this essential self would reassert its power and triumph over disaster. Vague, transitory, comforting, this premonition brooded above the wilderness of her thoughts. Yes, she was not broken. She could never be broken while the vein of iron held in her soul. 15

An instance of change or growth in Ellen Glasgow's perspective can be noted in the above quotation. In earlier novels, the source of the courage to act, the single-mindedness, and the fortitude, by which Ben Starr, Nick Burr, and Gabriella conquer circumstances, is not defined. With Dorinda, however, the source of these same qualities -- the "vein of iron"-- receives the emphasis and is traced to the very essence of being.

After spending three years in New York City, where Dorinda learns that life for her must hold something other than love, she returns to her home and conquers the barren ground, which is her symbol of fate. By borrowing money and employing scientific methods of farming, she turns neglected acres of broomsedge into pastures and fields of corn; and through the expressions of her "vein of iron" -- courage, fortitude, and the determination not to accept defeat-- the betrayed woman becomes the victor of life, not its victim. Then at fifty, reflecting on the source of her strength, Dorinda defines the "vein of iron" as a positive expression

15 Ibid., p. 184.

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of the will to live and the ancient instinct for survival:

After all, it was not religion; it was not philosophy; it was nothing outside her own being that had delivered her from evil. The vein of iron which had supported her through adversity was merely the instinct older than herself, stronger than circumstances, deeper than the shifting surface of emotion; the instinct that had said, "I will not be broken." Though the words of the covenant had altered, the ancient mettle still infused its spirit. 16

Man's agelong kinship with the soil is shown in Barren Ground as a part of the pattern of human life. In the early chapters of the book, the reader feels the presence of the land, only as a negative personality whose spirit has been drained of all vitality. But just as Dorinda's "essential self" reasserts its strength, so the inner power of the land comes to life; and often Dorinda glimpses the living spirit of the soil:

She knew that the place was more to her than soil to be cultivated; that it was the birthplace and burial ground of hopes, desires, and disappointments. The old feeling that the land thought and felt, that it possessed a secret personal life of its own, brushed her mood as it sped lightly by. 17

During the best years of her youth, when Dorinda is in closer communion with the soil than with any human being, she begins to understand the wisdom of old Matthew, her neighbor. "'Put your heart in the land,'" he would say to her. "'The land is the only thing that will stay by you.'" 18

16 Ibid., p.474.

17 Ibid., p.273.

18 Ibid., p.524.

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17 Ibid., p. 278.

18 Ibid., p. 524.

And as the years move ahead, the land, to her, becomes a source of strength and contentment. After Jason Greylock dies, Dorinda's spirit is crushed with poignant grief and despair for the youth, and the joy, and the love, which she will never know, until an affirmation of life is recaptured from the spirit of the land:

The storm and the hag-ridden dreams of the night were over, and the land which she had forgotten was waiting to take her back to its heart. Endurance. Fortitude. The spirit of the land was flowing into her, and her own spirit, strengthened and refreshed, was flowing out again toward life. This was the permanent self, she knew. This was what remained to her after the years had taken their bloom. She would find happiness again. 19

Time and the "spirit of place" act as positive forces in Dorinda's life. Her character develops with the years. Though time erases her youthful beauty and eager expectancy, it can never impair what Ellen Glasgow called her "inner fidelity."²⁰ Then, too, because Dorinda reclaims the barren ground, "the spirit of place" brings the peace that is more lasting than happiness. In direct contrast, however, Jason Greylock surrenders to his environment; and time destroys him. For as Ellen Glasgow said of him: "His breed, unlike Dorinda's, held no immunity from the fatal germ of resignation."²¹

19 Ibid., p. 524.

20 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 160.

21 Ibid., p. 161.

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Artistic Perspective. The outstanding literary merit of Barren Ground can be traced, in part, to the fact that Dorinda lived in Ellen Glasgow's imagination for ten years before her story came to be written; and in those ten years, Ellen Glasgow and Dorinda developed together. Of her kinship with Dorinda and its influence on the novel, she wrote:

We were connected, or so it seemed, by a living nerve. . . . There was never the slightest hesitation in my handling of her speech or her behavior. I was aware, through some sympathetic insight, of what she would say or do in any circumstances. From the beginning to the end, she breathed in my mind the air of probability. ²²

By adhering to a restricted point of view, by creating a landscape over which Time and Space dominate, and by the use of similes, Ellen Glasgow produced the "universal rhythm" ²³ and "the whole movement of life" which she felt Barren Ground possessed.

This entire narrative is conveyed to the reader through Dorinda's sensibilities and her consciousness. In earlier novels, Ellen Glasgow had employed a restricted point of view; but in Barren Ground, the effect is heightened wherever Dorinda's consciousness is dramatized. For instance, shortly after Dorinda is told by Jason's father that Jason has married Geneva Ellgood, her mind is flooded with these impressions:

Their first meeting in the road. The way he looked

²² Ibid., p. 163. Barren Ground, p. 157.

²³ Ibid., p. 154.

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22 Ibid., p. 183.

23 Ibid., p. 184.

at her. His eyes when he smiled. The red of his hair. His hand when he touched her. The feeling of his arms, of his mouth on hers, of the rough surface of his coat brushing her face. The first time he had kissed her. The last time he had kissed her. No. It isn't true. It isn't true. Deep down in her being some isolated point of consciousness, slow, rhythmic, monotonous, like a swinging pendulum, was ticking over and over: It isn't true. It isn't true. True. True. It isn't true. On the surface other thoughts came and went. That horrible old man. A fire in summer. The stench of drunkenness. Tobacco stains on his white beard. A rat watching her from a hole. How she hated rats! Did he suspect something, and was he trying to frighten her? Trying to frighten her. But she would let him see that she was too strong for him. She was not afraid.
 . . . 24

The element of Space is evoked by the unlimited vastness of the landscape, described in part when the story opens as

Bare, starved, desolate, the country closed in about her. . . . From the bleak horizon, where the flatness created an illusion of immensity, the broomsedge was spreading in a smothered fire over the melancholy brown of the landscape. 25

And throughout the novel, the infinite sweep of the landscape and the mood of sustained melancholy, which it produces, is kept before the reader. For example, Dorinda's thoughts are recorded, when, at evening on the day of her mother's funeral, she looks across her "vague glimmering fields":

For an instant, the permanence of material things, the inexorable triumph of fact over emotion, appeared to be the only reality. These things had been ageless when her mother was young; they would be still ageless when she herself had become an old woman. Over the immutable landscape human lives drifted and vanished like shadows. 26

24 Ellen Glasgow, Barren Ground, p. 157.

25 Ibid., p. 3.

26 Ibid., p. 345.

at her. His eyes when he smiled. The red of his hair. His hand when he touched her. The feeling of his arms, of his mouth on hers, of the rough surface of his coat brushing her face. The first time he had kissed her. The last time he had kissed her. No. It isn't true. It isn't true. Deep down in her being some isolated point of consciousness, slow, rhythmic, monotonous, like a swaying pendulum, was ticking over and over: It isn't true. It isn't true. Time. Time. It isn't true. On the surface other thoughts came and went. That horrible old man. A fire in summer. The stench of drunkenness. Tobacco stains on his white beard. A rat watching her from a hole. How she hated rats! Did he suspect something, and was he trying to frighten her? Trying to frighten her. But she would let him see that she was too strong for him. She was not afraid.

... 24

The element of Space is evoked by the unlimited vastness of the landscape, described in part when the story opens

25

Bare, starved, desolate, the country closed in about her. . . . From the bleak horizon, where the flatness created an illusion of immensity, the broomage was spreading in a smothered fire over the melancholy brown of the landscape. 25

And throughout the novel, the infinite sweep of the landscape and the mood of sustained melancholy, which it produces, is kept before the reader. For example, Dorinda's thoughts are recorded, when, at evening on the day of her mother's funeral, she looks across her "vague glimmering fields":

For an instant, the permanence of material things, the inexorable triumph of fact over emotion, appeared to be the only reality. These things had been useless when her mother was young; they would be still useless when she herself had become an old woman. Over the mutable landscape human lives drifted and vanished like shadows. 26

24 Ellen Glasgow, Barren Ground, p. 127.

25 Ibid., p. 3.

26 Ibid., p. 248.

A sense of time is achieved as the landscape reflects the passing seasons, and as the youth and the age, the life and the death of the human figures are recorded. And Time's finality and the irreconcilable changes it brings are felt when Dorinda, at forty or fifty, is suddenly reminded of her youth. Once, passing Jason Greylock's house, she recalls the tragedy of her girlhood:

Everything was before her then. There is no finality when one is young. Though they had been unendurable while she had passed through them, those years of her youth were edged now with a flame of regret. She felt that she would give all the future if she could live over the past again and live it differently. How small a thing her life appeared when she looked back on it through the narrow vista of time ! 27

The titles of the three sections into which Barren Ground is divided suggest the similarity between Dorinda's life and the natural growths of this Virginia countryside. The broomsedge, which old Matthew calls "' a kind of fate,'" ²⁸ represents the circumstances over which Dorinda triumphs; for the section entitled "Broomsedge" is devoted to the tragedy of her youth. Dorinda herself is like the "heart-shaped pine," which stood outside her mother's chamber window and which "rose above the shallow wash of broomsedge;" ²⁹ and the second part of the novel, which is called "Pine", tells

27 Ibid., pp. 521-522.

28 Ibid., p. 4.

29 Ibid., p. 6.

A sense of time is achieved as the landscape reflects the passing seasons, and as the youth and the age, the life and the death of the human figures are recorded. And time's finality and the irreconcilable changes it brings are felt when Dornida, at forty or fifty, is suddenly reminded of her youth. Once, passing Jason Greylock's house, she recalls the tragedy of her girlhood:

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represents the circumstances over which Dornida triumphs;

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tragedy of her youth. Dornida herself is like the "heart-

shaped pine," which stood outside her mother's chamber window

and which "rose above the shallow wash of promise;" and

the second part of the novel, which is called "Pine," tells

27 Ibid., pp. 221-222.

28 Ibid., p. 4.

29 Ibid., p. 6.

of Dorinda's victory over the barren ground. "Life-Everlasting", the third part of the book, receives its name from the peaceful fields of life-everlasting into which the broomsedge eventually turned; and it symbolizes the life Dorinda won through her "vein of iron."

VEIN OF IRON

(1901-1933)

Philosophic Perspective. Vein of Iron is a chronicle of the Fincastle family, the descendants of the Scotch-Irish settlers of the Great Valley of Virginia. Ellen Glasgow was closely acquainted with the people and the history of this rural section of her state, since her father's forebears were among the stalwart Presbyterian pioneers who found religious freedom there, and since she herself had spent many summers beyond the Blue Ridge with members of her father's family.

As the title suggests, Ellen Glasgow's chief concern was, not an individual character or group of characters, but rather the "vein of iron" itself, which, for the purposes of this novel, she defined as "the vital principle of survival, which has enabled races and individuals to withstand the destructive forces of nature and civilization." ³⁰ What she attempted to do was to test the resistance of this "vein of

30 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 169.

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attempted to do was to test the resistance of this "vein of

iron" to "outward pressure" from religion, from tradition,³¹ and from "the disintegrating forces in the modern world." Thus this novel became a vehicle for her critical analysis of religion, of tradition, and of modern civilization.

From the retrospect of Grandmother Fincastle, the reader learns that the "vein of iron" had held fast in past generations. The first John Fincastle, "pursuing a dream of a free country,"³² had led his people through the wilderness to Shut-In Valley, had built the first church in Ironside, and had taught Christianity to the Indians. And Grandmother Fincastle remembered her own grandmother, Martha Tod, who had been captured by the Indians and had been married to a young chief when she was only sixteen. Later, Martha Tod had been returned to her people, had married an elder of the church, and had raised ten children. Then Grandmother herself had withstood great hardships, for she had lived in a log cabin on Wildcat Mountain until Adam Fincastle brought her to the manse at Ironside. Seven of her nine children had died; but the greatest trial of faith had come when her son John had renounced his religion, when he had told the Presbytery that "he rejected the God of Abraham but accepted the God of Spinoza."³³

31 Ibid., p. 168.

32 Ellen Glasgow, Vein of Iron, p. 20.

33 Ibid., p. 45.

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31 Ibid., p. 168.

32 Ellen Glasgow, Vein of Iron, p. 20.

33 Ibid., p. 43.

Now the "vein of iron" is retested as Grandmother Fincastle, her son John and his wife, her daughter, Meggie, and her granddaughter Ada face the forces of modern civilization during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

The first test comes when Ralph McBride, who is engaged to marry Ada, succumbs to "outward pressure" from religion, and marries Janet Rowan, who accuses him of being her betrayer. Although he is innocent of Janet's charges, Ralph is unable to resist the forces of society which descend upon him; for, as a child, his will had been broken by his mother, who "had discovered that salvation was better than happiness."³⁴

In this tragic episode, Ellen Glasgow was denouncing certain aspects of religion, which are noted when Ada becomes aware of Mrs. McBride's subconscious motives in wanting her son to marry Janet:

Yes, religion could be a bitter and a terrible thing ! As a child, she had known that Mrs. McBride enjoyed punishing Ralph. Now she felt with the same aversion, that the older woman found a thrill of cruelty in the Christian symbols of crucifixion and atonement. She had wished him to marry Janet, Ada realized indignantly. She had wished him to be hurt. Even if she doesn't know it, the girl thought, she really hates him. Something deep down in her, perhaps an embittered love for his father, perhaps the crying blood of persecutors, was gratified when she thought that anyone, even her own child, would be punished by God. ³⁵

Through the strength derived from the "vein of iron" Ada recovers from the bitter anguish which follows Ralph's

³⁴ Ibid., p. 241.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 239.

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marriage. Then, six years later, there comes another severe test after Ralph and Ada break with tradition. While Janet seeks a divorce at Reno, and before he leaves for France as a soldier in the First World War, Ralph returns to Ironside; and, during the last three days of his visit, he and Ada enjoy an interlude of idyllic happiness at Thunder Mountain. Afterwards, when her prospective motherhood becomes apparent, Ada is subjected to the forces of religion and tradition exemplified by her grandmother's attitude.

To Grandmother Fincastle, Ada's "sin was carnal," and there could be no hope "except in a broken and contrite heart."³⁶ But though Ada was deeply moved by her grandmother's agony, she could not repent. Only by recalling the fortitude of the pioneer women whose "vein of iron" she shared, could she find comfort and strength:

Was the past broken off from the present? she mused, or did the vein of iron hold all the generations together? Sitting there, in touch with the land that had been won from the wilderness, she braced her own strength against that endurance, that hardness. How had her Great-great-grandmother Tod felt when she bore her child in the wigwam of a savage? What was her own plight to that? ³⁷

After Ada's son is born, and after Ralph and she marry, the "vein of iron" is tried again, as the Fincastles face the difficult post-war years and the great depression in the City of Queensborough. Here, the existence of the "vein of iron",

³⁶ Ibid., p. 245.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 248. *A Certain Measure*, p. 23.

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36 Ibid., p. 245.

37 Ibid., p. 248.

as a universal instinct for survival, is displayed; for not only the Fincastles but also many of their foreign-born neighbors are able to withstand the temptations and insecurity of modern civilization. And though the picture of life in a modern city during these years is often disheartening, Ellen Glasgow saw that the "vital principle of survival" tended to create a higher level of life, since such a feeling is expressed as Ada recalls her father's belief in the slow evolution of humanity:

Shelters and systems and civilizations were all overwhelmed in time, her father said, by the backward forces of ignorance, of barbarism, of ferocity. Yet the level would steadily rise, little by little; in the end other unities would emerge from the ruins; and the indestructible will of the world was toward life. 38

In John Fincastle, Ellen Glasgow portrayed the civilized man in an uncivilized world, and the fate of a philosopher and scholar in an age of science. Concerning him and his counterparts in other novels, she wrote:

This rare pattern of mankind has always attracted me as a novelist. I like to imagine how the world would appear if human beings were really civilized, not by machinery alone, but through that nobler organ which has been called the heart in the intellect. 39

John Fincastle's characterization discloses the possessions that Ellen Glasgow assigned to a truly civilized human being. These would appear to include sympathetic

38 Ibid., p.359.

39 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 39.

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John Winastie's characterization discloses the possessions that Ellen Glasgow assigned to a truly civilized human being. These would appear to include sympathetic

38 Ibid., p. 353.
39 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 39.

understanding for all that have life; an inner world built of thought, not of emotion; and a "self within the self," which remains always inviolable. His philosophy of life, he himself summarizes in these words:

If he were remembered by others, it would be either as a dangerous skeptic, or as a man of simple faith, who believed that God is essence, not energy, and that blessedness, or the life of the spirit, is the only reality. 40

Artistic Perspective. By adapting her style to her subject matter, by treating the past and the present as coexistent in time, and by weaving into the background a variation of sounds, Ellen Glasgow heightened the artistic quality of this novel.

Discussing the style of Vein of Iron, she wrote, in part:

Sophisticated wit and sparkling irony must be drained away from this bare and steady chronicle of simple lives. And so the speech of the heart, not the language of the mind, must serve as the revealing medium for my narrative. 41

Thus the natural simplicity and deep spirituality of those who live close to their God and the soil comes to light from the grave speech of the Fincastles, as the following quotations illustrate. John Fincastle tells his daughter:

"There are many kinds of goodness, my dear, but there is none that does not spring from the heart alone." 42

40 Ellen Glasgow, Vein of Iron, p. 292.

41 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 178.

42 Ibid., p. 181. Ellen Glasgow, Vein of Iron, p. 268.

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Ada speaks of her mother:

"It is only in the heart, she used to say, that anything really happens." 43

John Fincastle voices his reflections:

"I was wondering what kind of world we might have had if all the love that has been spent on a personal God and an individual human being had been spread over the whole of creation." 44

Another adaptation of style is noted in the presentation of the interlude on Thunder Mountain, and the last journey of John Fincastle back to the manse. In depicting these particular episodes, Ellen Glasgow remarked that "... beauty breaks through, not as an objective aim, but of its own inward movement, and submerges the naked structure of life." 45 In paragraphs like the following such natural beauty of style is apparent:

Seizing the wooden bucket, he ran down to the spring, while she went out on the grass and watched him swing through the moonlight as if it were water. The shadows by the spring sucked him in, and all the bubbling joy went flat in her heart; then he plunged back into the light, and the phosphorescent spray scattered again. This is life, this beauty, her thoughts were singing. This is love, this delight. 46

For the purposes of her theme it was necessary to create the Fincastle family as it existed in the past and in the present. Therefore, in the early chapters of the novel, Ellen Glasgow treated subjectively the points of view of the five members of the family while they are gathered

43 Ibid., p. 181.

44 Ibid., p. 120. A Certain Measure, p. 183.

45 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 183.

46 Ellen Glasgow, Vein of Iron, p. 211.

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43 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

45 Ellen Glasgow, *A Certain Measure*, p. 185.

46 Ellen Glasgow, *Vain of Iron*, p. 211.

before the fire on a December evening. Five separate moods and visions are revealed as the past is woven into the present, and each reverie is recorded in a rhythm adapted to the individual. For example, Grandmother Fincastle's reflections move in a slow vibrating rhythm, as the following lines suggest:

. . . More than fifty years ago, but it seemed only yesterday ! From the changeless tasks and the slow accretion of time, the day and the scene emerged into the firelight. . . . from the falling leaves. . . . and the shifting dust. . . . and the cobwebs. . . . and the dew. . . . 47

At the same time, the child Ada thinks of the immediate future in clear-cut cadences :

Nights were always short, except Christmas Eve, which was longer than anything. She hoped it would be snowy this Christmas. Aunt Meggie said it was blowing up cold. If there was deep snow, Ralph McBride was going to make a big snow man, the biggest they had ever had in their yard. . . . 48

After these early chapters, the point of view is restricted; and the events are recorded through the consciousness of either Ada or John Fincastle.

For Ellen Glasgow, the theme of this novel was woven of sounds-- "of blend sounds, of ringing, of murmuring, of harmonious and dissonant sounds."⁴⁹ Throughout the book a

47 Ibid., p. 46.

48 Ibid., p. 61.

49 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 183.

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... More than fifty years ago, but it seemed only
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of childhood and of things, of things, of things, of

happiness and of things, of things, of things, of things.

27 Ibid., p. 46.

40 Ibid., p. 61.

42 Ibid., p. 122.

variation of sounds emanates from the village, the countryside and the city; and their blending effects an atmosphere which Ada feels as she listens to the hum of life within the manse: "all the scattered threads of sounds seemed to be gathered into a single thread of existence."⁵⁰

THE SHELTERED LIFE

(1918-1919)

The Sheltered Life is a story of age and youth facing a world where the beliefs and certainties of the past were beginning to disintegrate. To Ellen Glasgow the title bespoke the theme, for, it implied "the effort of one human being to stand between another and life" in any age or any place. In portraying a sheltered life and its tragic outcome, she presented reality, as interpreted by age and youth; she examined the "shallow and sinless society" of

Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp. 211-12.

⁵⁰ Ellen Glasgow, Vein of Iron, p. 182.

³ Ibid., p. 205.

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CHAPTER IV

NOVELS OF THE CITY

Ellen Glasgow placed the four narratives that comprise the Novels of the City in her Queensborough, which, she said, is "the distilled essence of all Virginia cities rather than the speaking likeness of one."¹ The first three novels of this series, labeled "tragicomedies,"² depict tragic and comic aspects of life in a modern city while the fourth volume follows the general theme of Vein of Iron.

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1 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp. 211-12.

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happiness-hunters";⁴ and she wove into the reflections of General Archbald, the central figure, much of her "ultimate feeling about life."⁵

Through the contrasting viewpoints of old General Archbald and his young granddaughter, Jenny Blair Archbald, the story unfolds. "Nothing happens," Ellen Glasgow wrote, "that is not seen, on one side, through the steady gaze of the old man, seeing life as it is, and, on the other side, by the troubled eyes of the young girl, seeing life as she would wish it to be."⁶ Consequently, in this novel, Ellen Glasgow emphasized, not reality itself, as she had in her earlier novels, but rather the meaning of reality to age and youth. And, in doing this, she created the balance, as it exists in life, of divergent yet coexistent interpretations of the same events.

Separated, as they are, by a whole lifetime of experience Jenny Blair's vision is based on feeling alone while General Archbald's views^{is} are built of reason and reflection. For example, Jenny Blair, as a child of eight, is certain she knows what time is:

. . . she knew-- she had always known. She had only to shut her eyes very tight and repeat the word, and she saw that time was flat and round and yellow, but eternity was long and pale and narrow and shaped exactly

4 Ibid., p. 203. *The Sheltered Life*, p. 18.

5 Ibid., p. 204.

6 Ibid., pp. 200-201.

happiness-hunters"; and she wove into the reflections of General Archibald, the central figure, much of her "ultimate feeling about life."

Through the contrasting viewpoints of old General Archibald and his young granddaughter, Jenny Blair Archibald, the story unfolds. "Nothing happens," Ellen Glasgow wrote, "that is not seen, on one side, through the steady gaze of the old man, seeing life as it is, and, on the other side, by the troubled eyes of the young girl, seeing life as she would wish it to be." Consequently, in this novel, Ellen Glasgow emphasized, not reality itself, as she had in her earlier novels, but rather the meaning of reality to age and youth. And, in doing this, she created the balance, as it exists in life, of divergences yet consistent interpretations of the same events.

Separated, as they are, by a whole lifetime of experience Jenny Blair's vision is based on feeling alone while General Archibald's views are built of reason and reflection. For example, Jenny Blair, as a child of eight, is certain she knows what time is:

... she knew-- she had always known. She had only to shut her eyes very tight and repeat the word, and she saw that time was flat and round and yellow, but eternity was long and pale and narrow and shaped exactly

- 4 Ibid., p. 203.
- 5 Ibid., p. 204.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 200-201.

7

like a pod of green peas.

Then General Archbald, at eighty-four, considers its meaning:

And what was time itself but the bloom, the sheath enfolding experience? Within time, and within time alone, there was life-- the gleam, the quiver, the heart-beat, the immeasurable joy and anguish of being. . . . 8

Their dissimilar interpretations of happenings also reflect their inner worlds. While Eva Birdsong whom they both love dearly, faces a serious surgical operation, Jenny's impressions of illness and death are presented:

Slackening her steps the girl remembered, with a stab of reproach that Mrs. Birdsong was very ill and might die. "It is too dreadful," she added in a whisper. " It would be too dreadful to die in the spring."

But the thought was as empty as her voice. No matter how hard she tried, she could not make herself feel that illness and death really touched her. She could not believe that anything in the world mattered, except to be alive and to know what she wanted from life. She adored Mrs. Birdsong. She adored her so passionately that it was impossible to associate her with illness or death. "God wouldn't let it happen to her," she said, putting the fear out of her mind. "God wouldn't let her suffer like that." 9

And at almost the same time the General's thoughts are centered on Eva's illness and past memories:

Dropping down on a green bench in the park, beneath a disfigured tulip tree, which was putting out into bud, he tried to imagine her ill, suffering, and waiting calmly for that dreaded hour under the knife. But no, she chose, as always capriciously, her own hour

7 Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life, p. 12.

8 Ibid., p. 148.

9 Ibid., pp.209-210.

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8 Ibid., p. 148.

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and mood to return to him. Never had he seen her cast aside her armor of gaiety. Never, among all the women he had known, had she asked him for sympathy. Never once had she tried to take care of him. For all her loveliness, she was, he found himself thinking aloud to William, curled up on the grass by the bench, a strong soul in affliction. A strong soul, still undefeated by life she came to him now. 10

As the novel illustrates, blind happiness-hunting with its tragic outcome is a product of the sheltered life. Since she is protected from reality, Jenny Blair unconsciously learns to accept her feelings as facts; to center her existence on those feelings; and to hold circumstances, never herself, responsible for her destiny. When, at seventeen, she falls in love with George Birdsong, the husband of her mother's best friend, Eva Birdsong, she is incapable of assuming control over her feelings; and thoughts like the following are ever present in her mind:

Since it was useless to deny her love, she could only remind her conscience (near enough to the nineteenth century to make scruples) that she did not mean the slightest harm in the world. All she asked was to cherish this romantic love in the depths of her heart. "Nothing could make me hurt her," she thought passionately, "but it can't harm her to have me love him in secret." And, besides, even if she were to try with all her strength, she could not stop loving him; she could not destroy this burning essence of life that saturated her being. "When you can't help a thing, nobody can blame you." 11

10 Ibid., pp.135-136.

11 Ibid., p. 279.

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10 Ibid., pp. 133-134.

11 Ibid., p. 279.

Nourishing "this romantic love," she confuses sensation with happiness; and, like all who try to escape reality, she is untouched by conditions in the outside world. When John Welch, the young medical student, describes to her the helplessness of the poor, she thinks :

. . . Oh, yes, she knew, she knew; but she couldn't (and it wasn't her fault) find the poor interesting. She loved life, and she wanted to be happy; and if John called that the sparrow vision--well, there was nothing she could do about it. If attending to your own happiness meant the sparrow vision of life, that vision seemed to her to have its advantages. 12

Misdirection of her vital energy brings tragedy to Jenny Blair, as well as to the other happiness-hunters; for Eva Birdsong, distraught by illness and worry, kills her husband after she sees Jenny in his arms. And the pathos of a sheltered life is echoed in the closing lines of the story, as Jenny cries: "Oh, Grandfather, I didn't mean anything. I didn't mean anything in the world." 13

But the final scope of the theme goes beyond the prose surface of the novel. As Ellen Glasgow pointed out in her discussion of this story:

Not in the South especially; it was throughout the world that ideas, forms, were changing, the familiar order going, the beliefs and certainties. The shelter for men's lives, of religion, convention, social prejudice, was at the crumbling point, just as was the case with the little human figures in the story. . . . 14

12 Ibid., p. 299.

13 Ibid., p. 395.

14 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 205.

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13 Ibid., p. 299.

13 Ibid., p. 325.

14 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 205.

A realistic vision of man's weakening shelter is held by young John Welch, who is aware that a false sense of security exists everywhere. In one instance he tells the indifferent Jenny Blair that :

... There isn't any place far enough away for a man who asks more civilization, not less. It's silly to talk, as some people do, about seeking an opportunity outside the South, unless, of course, he is merely seeking more patients to experiment on, or more clients to keep out of prison. Our civilization is as good as the rest, perhaps better than most, because it's less noisy; but the whole thing is a hollow crust everywhere. 15

Since Ellen Glasgow has said that the lonely spirit of General Archbald holds much of her own feeling about life, his reflections are noteworthy as an affirmation of her philosophy. Like Ellen Glasgow, the deep sensitivity and sympathetic understanding which General Archbald possesses make him a truly civilized human being, whose strongest emotion is pity.

More than once he expresses the feeling that the meaning of life must remain elusive. At eighty-three he looks back over the past and reflects:

In each hour, when he had lived it, life had seemed important to him; but now he saw that it was composed of things that were all little things in themselves, of mere fractions of time, of activities so insignificant that they had passed away with the moments in which they had quivered and vanished. How could anyone, he asked, resting there alone at the end, find a meaning, a pattern ? 16

15 Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life, p. 297.

16 Ibid., p. 148.

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15 Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life, p. 227.

16 Ibid., p. 148.

And he voices Ellen Glasgow's high evaluation of goodness:

If it exists at all, pure goodness must be superior to truth, superior even to chastity. It must be not a cardinal but an ultimate virtue. 17

Then too, he recognizes the great importance of moral indignation in a world without permanent values. Speaking of John Welch, he notes:

"He is honest, anyway, and he has the rare gift of moral indignation. The longer I live, the more I realize that we lack moral indignation. Not moral hysteria, which springs from cruelty, but sober indignation." 18

Artistic Perspective. For illuminating her record of the sheltered life, Ellen Glasgow employed certain artistic Techniques, which account for the outstanding literary merit of this novel. Besides restricting the point of view to a representative of age and youth, she observed, more closely than in her early novels, the unities of place and time.

Like the two other tragicomedies, The Sheltered Life was planned within a narrow framework; for Ellen Glasgow felt that the form of these three novels demanded "a brief time-sequence, a limited scope, and a touch that was light, penetrating, satirical."¹⁹ The scene of The Sheltered Life is limited to the neighborhood of lower Washington Street in Queensborough; and although eight years elapse between the first and second parts of the novel, each section is confined to a brief period of time.

17 Ibid., p. 235.

18 Ibid., p. 374.

19 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 222.

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IV Idyl., p. 232.

18 Idyl., p. 274.

19 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 222.

In the second section of the novel, the past is evoked; and here, as in Vein of Iron, time is treated as a "subjective medium."²⁰ Part II, "The Deep Past," is confined to one hour during which old General Archbald sits on a green bench in the April sunshine while the fluidity of time carries him back and forth between the past and the present. He does not voluntarily recall the past; but rather he relives episodes of his youth, and at the same time, exists as an old man. For example, he finds himself in the November forest and he thinks:

Why was he here? How had he come? Was he awake or asleep? Ah, he knew the place now. A forest trail at Stillwater. But they had left Stillwater fifty years ago. Well, no matter. No matter that he was a boy and an old man together, or that the boy wanted to be a poet. It was all the same life. A solitary fragment, but the same fragment of time. Time was stranger than memory. Stranger than his roaming again through this old forest, with his snack and a thin volume of Byron tucked away in his pocket. 21

Ellen Glasgow wove through the atmosphere of her scene a smell, which she called "symbolic."²² Present in almost every episode, the strange smell from the chemical plant drifts up to Washington Street from Penitentiary Bottom, where unsheltered men and women live and labor. It symbolizes the world of reality which the old aristocratic families are attempting to evade by ignoring.

20 Ibid., p. 183.

21 Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life, pp. 148-149.

22 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 204.

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20 Ibid., p. 188.

21 Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life, pp. 148-149.

22 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 204.

In this novel, Ellen Glasgow adapted her style to²³
 her material by striving to make it "delicate yet unbreakable."²³
 The following fragments of descriptions show how successfully
 she realized her intention. The twilight is described as²⁴
 "a shadowy green afterglow, like the thin branches of trees."²⁴
 If the world were controlled by science alone, the General
 thought it might become "a thin-lipped world of facts without²⁵
 faith, of bones without flesh."²⁵ Mrs. Birdsong is described²⁶
 as being "sucked in by the twilight."²⁶ Jenny Blair's reactions²⁷
 are noted: "Love and sadness melted together and vanished."²⁷
 And from a description of the strange odor: "scarcely more
 than a whiff, yet strong enough to spoil the delicate flavour
 of living."²⁸

23 Ibid., p. 204.

24 Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life, p. 226.

25 Ibid., p. 145.

26 Ibid., p. 391.

27 Ibid., p. 94.

28 Ibid., p. 6.

29 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Manhood, pp. 212-214.

30 Ibid., p. 211.

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THE ROMANTIC COMEDIANS

(1923)

Philosophic Perspective. Commenting on the inception of The Romantic Comedians, Ellen Glasgow wrote:

After I had finished Barren Ground, which for three years had steeped my mind in the sense of tragic life, the comic spirit, always restless when it is confined, began struggling against the bars of its cage. It was thirsting, as I was, for laughter; but it craved delicate laughter with ironic echoes and it moved always upon the lighter planes of reality. . . . 29

Consequently, when life proffered the figure of Judge Gamaliel Honeywell, the story of his happiness-hunting "bubbled over with an effortless joy."³⁰ And in recording his search for happiness, as well as that of other "romantic comedians," Ellen Glasgow dealt with the universal illusion of perpetual youth, the universal desire to capture a permanent reality, and the unconquerable isolation of the human spirit. Also, she observed the circular course that happiness-hunters invariably follow, and the effect of the First World War upon conventions, codes, and morals.

A widower of sixty-six, reflecting the general recklessness of the post-war decade, Judge Honeywell marries lovely, youthful Annabel Upchurch. Like "romantic comedians" the

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world over, the Judge instinctively adheres to the immemorial illusion of perpetual youth and the ageless superstition that love and happiness are the same thing. Consequently, he convinces himself that by marrying Annabel he will capture, before it is too late, an ultimate happiness which life has hitherto denied him. For

What he saw in Annabel, he realized, was more than her loveliness, was more even than her inaccessible spirit. What he saw in her was all the assembled beauty of the world, as a whole universe of sea and sky and sun is mirrored within the magic crystal of a ring. 31

This union of age and youth, however, terminates in disillusionment and disaster. Where the Judge seeks a lasting happiness, he finds only a fugitive pleasure; and before many months elapse, he is deserted by his young wife who has fallen in love with Dabney Birdsong, a boy of her own age.

"In Judge Honeywell," Ellen Glasgow wrote, "I have tried to isolate and observe the pulse of life, not the pattern of declining gentility, but the universal hunger for a reality that is timeless."³² That the Judge's unfortunate marriage is an expression of this "universal hunger" is apparent to Mrs. Upchurch, Annabel's mother:

Made wise by sudden vision, she beheld his disaster less as an individual revolt against nature than as a part of the universal striving to break through the stale crust of experience into some intenser reality than life had afforded. 33

31 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, pp.185-86.

32 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 223.

33 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 277.

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love and happiness are the same thing. Consequently, he
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before it is too late, an illusion of happiness which life has

thwarted. He is disappointed, but he realizes, too late, that
his happiness was never more than an illusion. He has lost
all that he has, and he is left with a broken heart and a
life of sorrow. He is a man who has been deceived, and he
is now a man who is deceived.

This notion of love and youth, however, terminates in
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"Is Judge Hornswell," Ellen Elton wrote, "I have

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"Made wise by sudden vision, she beheld that
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further reality than life had afforded."

- 35. Ellen Elton, *The Hornswell Comedians*, p. 127.
- 36. Ellen Elton, *The Hornswell Comedians*, p. 128.
- 37. Ellen Elton, *The Hornswell Comedians*, p. 129.

Once or twice an intimation of "some intenser reality," for which all men eternally strive, is momentarily glimpsed. For example, as the Judge watches his young wife dancing, he thinks: "If only I can make her happy, I shall ask nothing else for myself. I will bear my discomfort." Then,

In that moment, with the very act of relinquishment, there was a break in the clouds and light streamed into his mind. A faint, thin vibration, clear as the ringing of bells and luminous as the sunrise, quivered about him. Was something there? Was it light? he asked himself. Was it music? Was it ecstasy? Was it God? For a single point of eternity, beyond time, beyond space, beyond good and evil, he surrendered to this incorruptible harmony, to this cloudless substance of being. Light? Music? Ecstasy? God? Or merely a rainbow mist of illusions? . . . 34

Just as the Judge is unable to seize the vision, so he fails to keep Annabel, his symbol of permanent happiness. And after Annabel leaves him, he becomes poignantly aware of the universal loneliness and isolation of all living things :

Around him there was eternal isolation of spirit. Not the human spirit alone, but the essence of all spirits. Spirits of men and women. Spirits of children. Spirits of animals. Spirits of plants. All immersed and drowning in loneliness. The loneliness of trees in tropical jungles, with roots piercing deep into immemorial darkness; the loneliness of buried rivers stealing out of the earth and into the earth again; the loneliness of lost and frightened animals in stony deserts of streets; the loneliness of the dying in the wan glimmer of daybreak; the vast, frozen loneliness of stars over remote continents of ice; --all these invisible aspects of desolation crowded round him in the

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chill mist where his thoughts sped pattering like
withered husks on the pavement. 35

Yet as the drama ends, the Judge demonstrates Ellen
Glasgow's observation that "happiness-hunters travel perpetually
on roads that are circular and lead back again to the begin-
ning." 36 For stirred anew despite his bitter experience, he
thinks: "' Spring is here, and I am feeling almost as young
as I felt last year.'" 37

Judge Honeywell is truly "man eternal." 38 The insatiable
hunger for happiness; the power to glimpse, but not grasp,
a permanent reality; and the sense of unbreakable isolation
make him "man eternal"-- "a spirit, restless, craving eter-
nally unsatisfied, yet with a wild comedy in its despair." 39

Mrs. Bredalbane, the Judge's twin sister, is in outlook
and experience the antithesis of her brother. Incarnating
the rare Victorian revolt against the sense of duty, she
escaped Queenborough after an "early fling"; and living
abroad, collected four husbands. "Mrs. Bredalbane alone,"
Ellen Glasgow noted, "seemed to prove that much can be done
with the pleasures of living, if only one approaches them

35 Ibid., p. 318.

36 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 216.

37 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 364.

38 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 223.

39 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 205.

child mist where his thoughts sped patterning like
withered husks on the pavement. 35

Yet as the drama ends, the Judge demonstrates Ellen

Glasgow's observation that "happiness-hunters travel perpetually

on roads that are circular and lead back again to the begin-

ning." For stirred anew despite his bitter experience, he

thinks: "Spring is here, and I am feeling almost as young

37

as I felt last year."

38

Judge Honeywell is truly "man eternal." The insatiable

hunger for happiness; the power to glimpse, but not grasp,

a permanent reality; and the sense of unbreakable isolation

make him "man eternal"--"a spirit, restless, craving eter-

nally unsatisfied, yet with a wild comedy in its despair." 39

Mrs. Bradshaw, the Judge's twin sister, is in outlook

and experience the antithesis of her brother. Intriguing

the rare Victorian revolt against the sense of duty, she

escaped Greenborough after an "early thing"; and living

abroad, collected four husbands. "Mrs. Bradshaw alone,"

Ellen Glasgow noted, "seemed to prove that much can be done

with the pleasures of living, if only one approaches them

35 Ibid., p. 318.

36 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 216.

37 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 264.

38 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 225.

39 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 202.

with a mind swept clean of prejudice and illusion." ⁴⁰ Mrs. Bredelbane's criticism of Victorian virtues and religious codes was, of course, Ellen Glasgow's. Recalling the past she tells her brother:

" . . . I've always believed that happiness, any kind of happiness, that does not make someone else miserable is meritorious. That, my dear brother, is what you held against me in Queenborough. You Episcopilians may have made most of the history and all the mint juleps in Virginia; but you have left your politics and your laws to the Methodists and Baptists, and pleasure-baiting has always been the favorite sport of those earnest Christians. . . . Oh, you know, Gamaliel, that you could have forgiven my committing a sin, if you hadn't feared that I had committed a pleasure as well. More than this, you resented the way I wasn't satisfied simply to stay ruined and to stew in a consciousness of sin for the rest of my life. It wasn't my fall, it was my being able to get up again, that you couldn't forgive--- " 41

To some extent, each character in the story reflects the general discontent and the loosening of codes, morals, and manners, which followed the First World War. Even Mrs. Upchurch, whose common sense has fostered "pragmatic morality" for more than a generation, begins to wonder about the past and speculate over the new freedom of the present:

. . . Was it true, she asked herself, in sudden depression, that not duty, but the fear of living, had held back youth in the past? In the earlier generations, how many girls had married men old enough to be their fathers or grandfathers, and yet nothing disastrous had come of it, nothing, at least with which husbands, aided by duty or the fear of living, had not been able to deal.

40 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp. 216-217.

41 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 227.

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- 40 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp. 216-217.
 41 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 227.

Women had known then how to live without love, just as they had known how to live without beauty or happiness; but she realized now, watching Annabel's bleak despair, that it had been because they had something else to put in its place. Something abstract and ultimate ! Something as unalterable and as everlasting as the Rock of Ages ! Even if duty were merely a symbol-- well, a symbol, Mrs. Upchurch decided, is better than an abyss to fall back upon. A quiver of weakness attacked her elbows and knees. It seemed to her that there were no longer any moral properties left in the world. Experience was reduced to the sum of pure egoism. 42

"In Annabel," Ellen Glasgow wrote, "I was portraying youth in arms against life. This is the aspect of youth with which I have always felt a sympathetic alliance, not modern youth alone, but perpetual youth, in its spirited challenge to circumstances, and its light-hearted revolt against the conspiracy of the years."⁴³ Annabel, who has left the Judge because "there isn't any sense in letting one mistake spoil your whole life,"⁴⁴ explains to her elderly husband the philosophy of modern youth:

"... It isn't only that you are not young. It is that you live in a different world, and life doesn't mean the same thing to you that it does to us. You believe that it is right to be unhappy, but we know that it is wrong to suffer. We know you aren't really yourself. That you aren't even alive when you're unhappy. So many women chain themselves to their own fears, and pretend they are being noble. They call the chain they have made duty; but after all, they are not noble; they are only afraid of life. Poor cousin Amanda ! All her virtues are rooted in fear. Never once has she dared to be herself, and she hasn't dreamed that courage to be yourself is the greatest virtue of all." 45

42 Ibid., p. 300.

45 Ibid., p. 324.

43 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 218.

44 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 315.

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- 48 Ibid., p. 300.
 - 49 Ellen Glasgow, *A Certain Measure*, p. 218.
 - 44 Ellen Glasgow, *The Romantic Comedians*, p. 215.

Artistic Perspective. Like the other tragicomedies, The Romantic Comedians adheres strictly to the dramatic unities. Excepting three very short episodes, the story takes place in Queenborough; the time-sequence is limited to one year; and five figures comprise the foreground characters.

Ellen Glasgow called the style of this novel "that of the vignette and necessarily circumscribed."⁴⁶ The following bits of characterizations and descriptions illustrate such adaptation:

From a description of Mrs. Bredalbane:

After one early scandal, she had indulged herself through life in that branch of conduct which was familiar to ancient moralists as nature in man and depravity in woman. 47

About Queenborough:

Where on earth could people know as little and yet know it so fluently? 48

The rising generation's attitude toward Mrs. Bredalbane:

They treated her scarlet letter less as the badge of shame than as some foreign decoration for distinguished service. 49

46 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 211.

47 Ellen Glasgow, The Romantic Comedians, p. 7.

48 Ibid., pp. 9 and 10.

49 Ibid., p. 84.

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Philosophic Perspective. They Stooped to Folly deals primarily with the ageless myth of the "ruined" woman. After delving into the history of mythology, Ellen Glasgow was, as she said, "visited by the idea of embodying one of the im-
50 memorial woman myths in a modern comedy of manners." After some consideration, the legend of the ruined woman was selected because she perceived that: "here was sentiment; here was chivalry; here was moral tradition; here was a well-honored
51 invention of man."

Although the drama revolves around three who "stooped to folly," other aspects of the times are included. Reflecting the confusion of a modern mechanistic society are the leading male characters. In *Virginus Little* page, Ellen Glasgow portrayed the modern man who fears action, yet desires its outcome; in *Martin Welding*, she examined the victim of war and society; and in *Marmaduke Littlepage*, she presented the civilized artist in an uncivilized world. With *Victoria Littlepage*, the leading feminine character, she tried, she said, "to explore the depths of the average woman of good
52 will;" and in her presentation of the friendship between

50 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp. 224-225.

51 Ibid., p. 234.

52 Ibid., p. 244. A Certain Measure, p. 235.

WHY STOOPED TO FOLLY

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Philosophic Perspective. They Stopped to Folly Goals

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50 Helen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, pp. 224-225.

51 Ibid., p. 234.

52 Ibid., p. 244.

Victoria and Louisa Goddard, she attempted to illustrate the interdependence of women.

Within a circumscribed scene three varying stages of chivalry and moral tradition are represented by three "lost ladies", Aunt Agatha, Mrs. Dalrymple, and Milly Burden. Aunt Agatha, after "stooping to folly" during the 'seventies, had been condemned to her third-story back bedroom. For tradition, encouraged by the family physician, decreed that "whenever the desperate passion of love visited the curving bosom of a Southern lady, desire was transformed into a mental affliction."⁵³ Despite her harsh treatment, Aunt Agatha symbolizes an era when women embraced their martyrdom. For, as Ellen Glasgow saw fit to note, Aunt Agatha "had clung firmly, though submissively, not only to her simple trust in the Protestant Episcopal Church, but even to her maiden faith in man."⁵⁴ As an elderly magdalen she finds the sole pleasure, if not the sole purpose of life, in motion pictures and banana sundaes.

To Ellen Glasgow, Mrs. Dalrymple, the ruined belle of the 'nineties was "the perfect bloom of that chivalry in which the Southern lady has so profusely flourished and fallen."⁵⁵ Mrs. Dalrymple had been divorced by her husband after playing the role of heroine in a sensational scandal.

53 Ellen Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 85.

54 Ibid., p. 208.

55 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 235.

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53 Ellen Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 85.

54 Ibid., p. 208.

55 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 235.

But since her conduct had in no way impaired her beauty, she had married again; and after the death of her second husband, she became notorious, both in Paris and Queenborough, for her "impudent conduct."

Milly Burden, who should have been the ruined woman of the nineteen-twenties, embodies what Ellen Glasgow called "immoderate youth in revolt, and the latest, perhaps the final version of the favorite sport both of kings and common-⁵⁶ers." Milly was not "ruined" simply because she refused to consider herself so. Her attitude-- the attitude of modern youth-- is best expressed by Marmaduke Littlepage, who says of her :

"... As far as she is concerned, the world might have been born amblyopic. Whether you realize it or not, being ruined is not a biological fact but a state of mind. It may sound paradoxical to any survivor of the nineteenth century, but Milly has proved to me that it is impossible to ruin a woman as long as she isn't aware of it. . . . " 57

The confusion which resulted when a traditional pattern of mind was stirred by post-war psychology is encountered in Virginus Littlepage. "As his character develops," Ellen Glasgow noted, "we gradually approach the modern man who fears action, yet desires the things that only action can win."⁵⁸ Although the impulses he had been taught to bridle are aroused by the image of Mrs. Dalrymple, when the time

56 Ibid., p. 243.

57 Ellen Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 212.

58 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 238.

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The contrast which resulted when a traditional pattern of mind was stirred by post-war psychology is encountered in Virginia Littlepage. "As his character develops," Ellen Glasgow noted, "we gradually approach the modern man who fears action, yet desires the things that only action can win." 58 Although the impulses he had been taught to bridge are aroused by the image of Mrs. Dalrymple, when the time

56 Ibid., p. 243.
57 Ellen Glasgow, They Stopped to Tally, p. 212.
58 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 232.

comes to make love to her, he is defeated by a confused will. For

Though he still desired Mrs. Dalrymple, he was content, at least for the present, to desire her less as a happy lover than as a disappointed idealist. For, in common with the best masculine taste of the great tradition, he preferred sin on the stage and elsewhere when it was treated in the grand manner with an orchestral accompaniment. Without musical or at least dramatic support, he felt that it left one entirely too much at the mercy of one's appetites; and appetites, though useful in evolution, are superfluous in the finished product of a Southern gentleman. 59

A criticism of modern society is apparent in the characterization of Martin Welding. Martin suffers not only from an inherited weakness of fibre, but also from all the post-war neuroses. "Had the war never been fought," commented Ellen Glasgow, "he would have been in arms against life; he would have been defeated by the hostile forces of our civilized conformity." 60 And regarding himself and society Martin claimed:

"... The trouble with me is that I ought never to have been born, and everything I've ever done in my life has only made that more evident. But so long as I had to be born," he continued, with passionate resentment, "I might just as easily have been born in some other part of the world. Could anything but a machine survive this mass production of mediocrity you call progress?" 61

Marmaduke Littlepage, who had lost both his leg and his idealism in France, is, despite his sardonic humor, a

59 Ellen Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, pp.298-299.

60 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 242.

61 Ellen Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 309.

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Maryanne Littlepage, who had lost both his leg and his idealism in France, is, despite his sardonic humor, a

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- 59 Ellen Glasgow, They Stopped to Folly, pp. 238-239.
60 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 242.
61 Ellen Glasgow, They Stopped to Folly, p. 302.

civilized human being living in an uncivilized world. As an artist, his philosophy can be glimpsed from a fragment of conversation between his sister-in-law Victoria and himself:

" All I am trying to do is to get in touch with some form of reality."

"But do you believe that reality is obliged to be ugly?"

"I believe nothing. I paint what I see. If you choose to call it ugliness instead of beauty, that isn't my fault. You must blame it either upon an Act of God or a miscarriage of nature."

"We were taught when I was young," Victoria remonstrated gently, "that truth is beauty."

"I know we were, my dear sister. That is a part of our trouble." 62

Like Virginia Pendleton, Victoria Littlepage possesses a goodness of heart far in advance of her head. Through the medium of simple goodness, she feels her way far beyond the reaches of custom and convention. It was Victoria who had aided Aunt Agatha in putting out "a faint December blooming" in the Red Cross sewing rooms. It was Victoria, alone among Queenborough women, who befriended Mrs. Dalrymple after her dramatic divorce. And it is Victoria, who arranges that Milly Burden have the freedom to begin everything over again.

"After all, what is the right kind of woman? And why should any kind of woman be responsible for the moral sense of a man?" 63

62 Ibid., p. 208.

63 Ibid., p. 146.

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62 Ibid., p. 208.

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Victoria remarks to her friend, Louisa Goddard. Actually, Victoria is as universal as Dorinda Oakley; for she is the woman of every generation who follows the dictates of her own heart, despite tradition, despite psychology, despite man-made myths.

Ellen Glasgow felt that a complete picture of "our time" must include a pure and unselfish friendship between two women. The fellowship between Victoria and Louisa Goddard was symbolic, she felt, of the growing understanding among women of their reciprocal dependence. Victoria voices a sentiment probably not unusual among women when she evaluates the friendship in the following way:

. . . . Though she had been a perfect wife to Virginus, there were moments when she acknowledged that in her heart of hearts she had never really liked men. She was fond of Virginus; she was faithful; she was tender in affliction; yet she had never except for the few months of courtship, enjoyed him as naturally as she enjoyed Louisa. For more than fifty years Louisa had understood her more absolutely than any man can understand the woman he loves. Beautiful as this long association had been, it was fortunate, Victoria reflected now, that it had come to flower before the serpent of Freudian psychology had poisoned the sinless Eden of friendship. 64

Artistic Perspective. A circumscribed time and place, a contributing factor in every act and in every speech, a principal character who served as a valid interpreter, and a character who possessed the vitality to grow beyond the

64 Ibid., p. 185.

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... Though she had been a perfect wife to Virginia, there were moments when she acknowledged that in her heart of hearts she had never really liked him. She was fond of Virginia; she was faithful; she was tender in affliction; yet she had never except for the few months of courtship, enjoyed him as naturally as she enjoyed Louise. For more than fifty years Louise had understood her more absolutely than any man can understand the woman he loves. Beautiful as this long association had been, it was fortunate, Victoria reflected now, that it had come to flower before the serpent of Freudian psychology had poisoned the fountains of friendship. 64

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a contributing factor in every act and in every speech, a principal character who served as a valid interpreter, and a character who possessed the vitality to grow beyond the

author's control are the artistic features of They Stooped to Folly mentioned by Ellen Glasgow in her discussion of the book.

The most narrowly restricted of her works, this novel covers only six months; and its scenes are limited almost entirely to four Queenborough settings; Mr. Littlepage's office, the Littlepage home, Marmaduke's studio, and Mrs. Dalrymple's parlor. The device of reflective interludes and soliloquies recreates the near and distant past, which is essential for the theme of moral tradition.

Referring to the form of this novel, Ellen Glasgow pointed out: "Harmony was essential in the relation of the parts to the whole. . . . Every incident, every fragment of dialogue, however spontaneous, must contribute something, if merely an accent."⁶⁵

Such a use of dialogue is found in the following, for what appears to be a bit of inconsequential conversation actually serves to heighten Ellen Glasgow's observations on modern Americans:

Mr. Littlepage is advising his son Curle to take a little more time with his meals.

"Oh, I don't bother about dyspepsia," Curle replied in his hurried tone, without waiting, his father noticed disapprovingly, to chew his food before he gulped it down. "Whenever I feel a pain, I swallow a pellet."

65 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 236.

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"Oh, I don't bother about dyspepsia," Curie replied in his hurried tone, without waiting, his father noticed disapprovingly, to chew his food before he gulped it down. "Whenever I feel a pain, I swallow a pellet."

"That," Mr. Littlepage rejoined moodily, "is inviting dyspepsia." And it crossed his mind, though he yielded to no one in the sentiment of patriotism, that it was in keeping with the American brand of courage to invite dyspepsia with a panacea in one's pocket. 66

Avoiding vehemence of any kind, Ellen Glasgow projected her drama against a civilized background, from which, because of his humane urbanity and fair-mindedness, Virginius Littlepage emerges as the official interpreter of his times. The import of his impartial reflections is apparent, for example, when he considers the attitude of the average woman, his family, and himself toward the First World War.

. . . . Unhappily, he could not deny that all the women of his acquaintance had been thrilled, at least in the beginning, by the long reverberations of the Great War. Mothers who lost sons were naturally an exception; but he had remarked that even mothers who had lost sons were inspired, if not consoled, by the popular superstition that heaven lies within the shadow of the crossing swords, and that death in battle possesses some mysterious sanctity which is absent from the most heroic death in peace. For example, he knew that he himself (as well as Victoria and Aunt Agatha and Louise Goddard, who worked untiringly in peace to discover the cause of war) considered big guns and poison gas inadequate means of settling an argument, and regarded all wars as barbarous, except the Civil War and the Spanish War about which he had had his doubts and the Great War, which was fought not only to end war but to preserve a moral ideal. Yes, he could not forget that he, in company with all the other inhabitants of Queenborough (not including the few disreputable pacifists to whom they stopped speaking), had unanimously disapproved of all other wars

66 Ellen Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 263.

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 Littlepage emerges as the official interpreter of his times.
 The import of his impartial reflections is apparent, for
 example, when he considers the attitude of the average woman,
 his family, and himself toward the First World War.

... Unhappily, he could not deny that all the
 women of his acquaintance had been thrilled, at
 least in the beginning, by the long reverberations
 of the Great War. Mothers who lost sons were
 naturally an exception; but he had remarked that
 even mothers who had lost sons were inspired, if
 not consoled, by the popular superstition that
 heaven lies within the shadow of the crossing sword,
 and that death in battle possesses some mysterious
 aspect which is absent from the most heroic death
 in peace. For example, he knew that he himself
 well as Victoria and Aunt Agatha and Louise Goddard,
 who worked untiringly in peace to discover the cause
 of war, considered big guns and poison gas inadequate
 means of settling an argument, and regarded all wars
 as barbarous, except the Civil War and the Great
 War about which he had had his doubts and the Great
 War, which was fought not only to end war but to pre-
 serve a moral ideal. Yes, he could not forget that
 he, in company with all the other inhabitants of
 Greenborough (not including the few blasphemous
 pacifists to whom they stopped speaking), had
 unanimously disapproved of all other wars

as passionately as they approved of the one righteous war they were immediately waging. 67

Ellen Glasgow ascribed the principle of inherent growth to all her novels. Considering this novel as a "living organism," she noted that Victoria Littlepage advanced beyond the author's command. "I had meant to keep Victoria in the background," she stated, "to draw her, somewhat sketchily and flippantly, as a tiresome good woman; and I was even inclined to be a little annoyed when I found that she had, as the actors say, 'stolen' a chief role." 68 As the story develops, the other feminine characters revolve around Victoria; and even after her death, her existence in the mind of every character continues to play a leading part.

67 Ibid., p. 127.

68 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 244.

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IN THIS OUR LIFE

(1938-1939)

Philosophic Perspective. In This Our Life is Ellen Glasgow's last study of fortitude. Focusing her inquiring mind upon the inner life of a community, she set herself the problem of analyzing the "modern temper"⁶⁹ and of examining, from a closer angle than ever before, man's instinctive fortitude. The major theme of this novel, she noted," is the conflict of human beings with human nature, of civilization with biology;⁷⁰ and summing up the dominant meaning, she added: "In this constant warfare tragedy lies, not in defeat, but in surrender."⁷¹

Through the consciousness of a group, she portrayed the "modern temper" by revealing its distraction from permanent values, the weakening of its moral fibre, its lack of stamina, its conversion to materialism, its fear of life. And, as her final interpretation of fortitude, she presented a middle-aged man and a young girl controlling their destinies by refusing to surrender to the forces about them.

Reflecting the instability and disorder of the modern world is Craig Fleming, who is often controlled completely by

69 Ibid., p. 249.

70 Ibid., p. 250.

71 Loc. cit.

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the forces of human nature, since he possesses no lasting standards of his own. Asa Timberlake analyzes Craig in the following way :

. . . he's futile. Like all the rest of us, like our world, our time, our code of living, he has no direction; he is incapable of any permanent motive. Ideas may matter to him, but they do not matter enough. He has never known what he believed. Or is it that he has never really believed anything? Feeling has eaten him through and through, and there has been nothing hard and strong in him to resist it. 72

Excessive egoism, wild happiness-hunting and arrested moral development are portrayed in Stanley Timberlake, Asa's younger daughter. A few days before her marriage to Craig Fleming, Stanley elopes with Peter Kingsmill, the husband of Roy, her older sister. Six months later, Peter commits suicide and Stanley returns to Queenborough. One evening while she drives recklessly through the city during a rainstorm, her car kills a little girl; but to her family and the police, Stanley implies that Parry, a young negro boy, is responsible for the accident. When her father insists that the authorities be told the truth, she turns for sympathy to Craig, who is now engaged to Roy, and reawakens in him the passion he once felt for her. To Ellen Glasgow, Stanley was the embodiment of "the perverse life of unreason, the logical result of that modern materialism which destroys its own happiness." 73

72 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 259.

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72 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 282.
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To encircle the inner life of a community, it was of course essential that the negro race, as well as the white, be treated realistically. Almost all of Ellen Glasgow's novels include members of the colored race, but only in this story does she enter into the consciousness of a Negro character. Minerva, Parry's mother, reflects on the changes among her own people:

. . . But even colored folks in these days had forgotten how to be happy. They couldn't be like her old mammy and pappy when they were alive--satisfied to make happiness out of a little or nothing-- just from patting and shouting, just from looking on at a wedding, or even a funeral if the hearse had nice plumes on it. Nobody ever had to tell her mammy and pappy to go out and enjoy themselves. They did it just by living and not studying about it. 74

And indicative of a susceptibility to defeat is the lack of stamina revealed in Parry, who loses his spirit and ambition after spending a night in the Negro section of the local jail for the crime in which he had no part.

Man's instinctive fortitude was being subjected, Ellen Glasgow observed, not only to the forces of life, but also to the "brutal power of modern industrialism."⁷⁵ She saw a social system organized and operated for material standards alone. As old William Fitzroy, the wealthy Southern industrialist, explains: "' If I believed in money,-- damn it to hell!-- it

74 Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 75.

75 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 253.

76 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 256.

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74 Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 75.

75 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 283.

was because there was nothing else to believe in."⁷⁶ And at the other end of the social system is Asa, who earns fifty dollars a week in a tobacco factory where he has been a faithful worker for forty-seven years. "He was as insecure, he told himself, as a dying leaf on a stem. When he had outlived his usefulness, he could expect nothing better than the ignominy of private or public relief."⁷⁷

With the unconventional meeting of Roy and the strange Englishman, Ellen Glasgow presented her interpretation of modern man's abnormal fear of life. The lost Englishman tells Roy that only by fighting in the imminent Second World War can he hope to find safety from the hollow fear which has driven him to the brink of insanity. He believes that the actual fear of war may drive the false fear away. "'That may save me,'" he tells Roy. "' Fighting something solid. Fighting what others are fighting."⁷⁸ He personifies, Ellen Glasgow noted, "a modern malady, an individual fear of life which was seeking to lose itself in a collective fear of death."⁷⁹

Observing closely the rapidly changing world about her, Ellen Glasgow emphasized other aspects of the "vein of iron." In this final version of her favorite theme, she saw

⁷⁶ Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 353.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 457.

⁷⁹ Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 256.

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76 Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 353.
 77 Ibid., p. 10.
 78 Ibid., p. 437.
 79 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 353.

man's instinctive fortitude displayed in "the quiet desperation"⁸⁰ with which he struggled against the forces of human nature and modern civilization; and she observed a rare victory, not in an escape from defeat, but rather in a refusal to surrender to these forces.

Of the eight foreground characters only Asa and his daughter Roy remain unconquered. Life withholds or takes away the things they love and desire most, yet they fight on toward a goal neither can see.

Asa proves, to a greater extent than any other human figure of these novels, that character is an end in itself. He never feels the power over circumstances that Dorinda realizes over the land; he never knows of material success as Ben Starr or Gabriella does; he loses even pride, which the Fincastles keep intact; and courage, in the sense of aggressive action, lies beyond his reach. Yet some essence within his soul keeps him from surrendering, though he feels at times, "that the moral universe, the very foundation of all order, has trembled, has toppled over, has vanished."⁸¹

A suggestion of what this essence may be comes when Asa, watching Roy's bitter despair, asks himself:

In the flux of time, what was valid, what was permanent? Was there nothing he could offer her,

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 253.

⁸¹ Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 53.

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80 *Ibid.*, p. 253.

81 Ellen Glasgow, *In This Our Life*, p. 55.

nothing, except that blind instinct for decency which mankind had picked up and lost, and picked up again, between lower and upper levels of barbarism? Was there nothing else, not even a trail of smoke from the old altars? 82

His question remains unanswered, but "that blind instinct for decency," evolving in the mind of man, would appear to be the basis of a moral order, in which Ellen Glasgow firmly believed; and evidences of such a tendency would seem to be found in the existence of the Good, the only principle she considered worthy of worship.

Since the central figure of this novel is not an individual character, but rather "the interior life of a community,"⁸³ the diffusion of the stream of life and the fluidity of time are ever present. For example, Asa experiences fugitive moments of illumination like the following:

Time comes, time passes. But what was time? An element or an illusion? Flow or duration? And how deep was the gulf that divided yesterday from today, or today from tomorrow? The scene was so breathless, so drowned in stillness, as if in a well of being, that it seemed to him his pulses had ceased their vibration. Not only time but life itself was suspended. Nothing moved. Nothing passed. The drifting pollen, the bird on the wing, the flower on the weed, the ripened seed in the flower, the bronzed leaves on the elm, the shadows asleep on the grass-- all these things were as motionless as is the pause between the flow and ebb of a tide, or the breath between the thought and the spoken word. . . . 84

And he is sometimes conscious of a coexistence of self:

Can a man have two separate selves? Can he be

82 Ibid., pp.434-435.

83 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 249.

84 Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 188.

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This novel, Ellen Glasgow felt, came to "a pause,
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not an end; " and had her strength returned before her death in 1945, she would, no doubt, have kept the promise she had made herself -- to write "of Asa's hard-won freedom, and its effect upon other lives, in a novel which I have
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Artistic Perspective. In This Our Life was awarded the Pulitzer prize in literature for the year 1941. The only one of Ellen Glasgow's novels to be so honored, its artistic merit, in part, is due to the manner in which the interior life of a community is created; to the means by which the fluid state of thought is presented; and to the adaptations of style.

The consciousness of a community is pictured, primarily, by recording how life feels to six different individuals, representing three generations and two races. In addition to Asa and Roy, Asa's wife Lavinia, William Fitzroy and his wife, Charlotte, and Minerva are treated subjectively.

85 Ibid., pp. 237-238.

86 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 263.

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86 Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 252.

87 Ibid., p. 264.

Moreover, Asa, around whom the others revolve, is well acquainted with the life lived there in the past; thus his sensitive mind illuminates the changes time brings. On the other side, Roy's consciousness records vividly the immediate present, and the feeling of the generation that shares the present while it shapes the future.

The creation of the fluidity of thought and feeling is accomplished, Ellen Glasgow revealed, by following the "wandering flow of thought and emotion, whether it was revealed on the surface, in conscious reflections and in eddying shallows and broken images, or whether, as impulse and sensation, a wave stirred and broke in the darkened reaches of the unconscious mind."⁸⁸

The style of the story, she disclosed, "fell naturally into the more rapid prose of a transitional epoch." And the movement of the entire book, she felt, was set to the beat and cadence found in the opening paragraph. That basic rhythm can be seen in the following sentences with which the story begins:

The street was darkened by a smoky sunset, and light had not yet come on in the lamps near the empty house. Under a troubled sky the old house looked deserted but charged with reality. It was a place, Asa Timberlake thought, where everything had happened and nothing would ever happen again. Its life, with so many changing lives, was finished. 89

88 Ibid., p. 251.

89 Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 3.

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And no doubt to heighten the conception of a flowing stream of life, the flight of pigeons, moving shadows, sounds of wind, and scents from the past are used in what she called
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"impressionistic recurrence."

In dominant themes, in recurring characteristics, and in implied or pronounced judgments, Ellen Glasgow's conception of character or true human worth has been clearly defined. To her, the more of being is the active expression of the will to live, the instinct to survive. She has called it the "enduring fibre of human nature," the "spirit of fortitude," the "living pulse of endurance," the "vein of iron." It is that essence of being that rose as it strived and struggles against contending forces: "I will not be defeated. I will not surrender."

This positive fortitude, she believed, demands that man take upon himself the task of controlling his destiny. Not tradition or religion, not environment or history can be held liable for the happiness and sorrow life yields. For, although man can neither entirely make nor wholly change circumstances, the "vein of iron" gives him the power to control them.

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90, Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 260.

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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF ELLEN GLASGOW'S PERSPECTIVES

PHILOSOPHIC PERSPECTIVE

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Moreover, Ellen Glasgow considered moral values and sympathetic understanding essential elements of character. And the truly civilized human being, she felt, would possess

an inner world where thought, not emotion, rules, and "a self within the self," which remains secure against time and events.

Man's character, she was convinced, is man's fate; for man's success or failure in controlling circumstances depends upon character. Finally, as her last novels attest, she saw that character is not necessarily a means to material ends, but an end in itself; and a victory over life is realized whenever man refuses to surrender to life's destructive forces.

Thus, recording the social history of the South primarily as it affected character, she confirmed fundamental truths about human experience. That change is the only permanent law, that man is enslaved by many illusions, and that the pathos of life is worse than the tragedy are verities that pervade her work.

In every aspect of Southern life, she observed beginnings and cessations, developments and dissolutions, victories and defeats. And because she treated the South as a fraction of the larger universe, in most instances, the changes were a part of national or world evolution. In early novels, she recorded the immediate and prolonged results of the Civil War and the industrial awakening; she depicted the gradual rise of the "lower orders" and their new democracy, and the gradual decline of the aristocracy and their great tradition; also she pictured the extinction of the idealized gentlewoman, and the birth of feminine independence. In later novels, she

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reported the diminishing power of religion and convention in controlling and sheltering men's lives; she portrayed the trends in thought and action that followed the First World War; and finally, she illustrated the effects of modern mechanistic society.

Then, since her inquiring mind demanded that she present the actualities of life, throughout her novels, she exposed the false ideas, the illusions, and the myths, by which the lives of men and women have been or are regulated and often ruined. As a young writer, she invalidated the romantic conception of the Civil War and the Confederacy; she brought to light the sentimentality of the aristocratic tradition; and she began her relentless exposé of "evasive idealism," that archenemy of reason and reality. Later, she disclosed the weaknesses and cruelties of conventional and religious codes, especially with respect to the well-bred woman and the betrayed woman; and she revealed the inconsistencies in the everlasting superstitions that love and happiness are the same thing, and that love alone fulfills the purpose of a woman's life. Then, in the tragicomedies, she took particular delight in puncturing the myths created by man concerning his self-importance, his perpetual youth, and the "ruined" woman. Finally, she illustrated the tragedy resulting from the false ideas that protection from reality, moral license,

reported the diminishing power of religion and convention in controlling and sheltering man's lives; she portrayed the trends in thought and action that followed the First World War; and finally, she illustrated the effects of modern mechanistic society.

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Although Ellen Glasgow was often amused and aroused by man's inconsistencies, in the end, her laughter and indignation yielded to sympathetic compassion. Because of her innate sensitivity and her fellow-feeling for all humanity, the pathos of man's ignorance, his prejudices, his barbarism, and his self-interest caused her greater anguish than the tragedy these things brought. Her pity and condolence were awakened whenever she considered the victims of war, not only those who participate in actual combat, but also those who must endure the abrupt and often sinister changes war brings, and, above all, those who feel a need for war. Her understanding and her tender sorrow were offered to the women whose simple goodness played into the hands of tradition and religion, and to those women who became the victims of wild happiness-hunting. But her deepest feelings went to the truly civilized human beings, who are forced to live in this uncivilized world.

With the writing of Barren Ground and the novels that followed, Ellen Glasgow attempted to render the whole movement of life. She began to transmit time and the entire composition of being as fluid, not fixed. To her, life is composed of beauty and splendor, of cruelties

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and frustrations; and being itself consists of immeasurable joy and bitter anguish. In fugitive illuminations man, she realized, is convinced that life holds a meaning, and that he can break through the outer shell of experience and grasp a permanent reality. Yet in other moments, he is overwhelmed by the inadequacy of all experience, and by the unconquerable isolation of the human spirit. She came to see that age and youth possess widely divergent viewpoints, and that experience flows between the two contrasting realities, as a stream flows in a narrow valley. Regarding time as flow, not duration, she knew that the past and the present might coexist in one consciousness; and the strong man within and the average man without might exist within one personality. Finally, she sensed the diffusion of the stream of life, the ebbing and flowing of thought and emotion, not only individual feeling and reflection, but the spreading out and the wandering ^{course} ~~ferth~~ of family or community consciousness.

With such a vision of life, with such a rich and vital consciousness of reality, Ellen Glasgow heightened consciousness and illuminated experience. What she wrote about In This Our Life, her last novel, can be applied to the entire body of her work, as a final affirmation of what these novels

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meant to her. She said:

I was not trying to make men better or happier or more reasonable. I was merely rendering, as perfectly as I could, what I believed to be a partial truth of experience. It was not the whole truth or the only truth, but my special share of the whole truth and of the only truth. ¹

Artistic Perspective

To Ellen Glasgow, characterization, point of view, form, and style were integral parts of the "living organisms" of her novels. Although she acknowledged scrupulous revision, for her, technique was always a part of creation, not a separate process, prescribed by formula or rule.

She was able to create real and memorable characters, primarily, because most of her human figures were subconsciously conceived. Within her imagination, they developed slowly, sometimes over a period of many years. And when the actual writing began, they were more real to her than living people. Consequently, she identified herself with the central figures and adhered naturally to a restricted point of view. As her art developed, she dramatized consciousness; she created rhythms adapted to individual personalities; and she presented subtle variations of thought and feeling.

¹ Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 254.

Although her characters are more unlike than they are alike, and although no one individual is mistakable for another, they can be roughly classified, not as types peculiar to the South, but as universal species of mankind. Among her women are those who possess an abundance of simple goodness, like Virginia and Victoria Littlepage; there are those who conquer circumstances with a gay and gallant heart, like Betty Ambler and Sally Mickleborough; those who master fate with determination and fortitude, like Dorinda and Gabriella; and there are those who challenge circumstances by risking everything for happiness, like Annabel Upchurch and Milly Burden. Similarly, her male characters can be grouped. There are those whose fortitude and singlemindedness give them the power to forge ahead with the times, like Nick Burr and Ben Starr; there are the truly civilized men, like John Fincastle and General Archbald; those who are the victims of war and modern society; and those whose urbane humanity makes them valid interpreters of the age they live in, like Mr. Littlepage and Asa Timberlake.

Ellen Glasgow's determination to present the actualities of life influenced her artistic techniques. As a young writer, her historic conscience demanded accurate reproductions of actual places. With later novels, however,

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Ellen Glasgow's determination to present the actualities of life influenced her artistic technique. As a young writer, her historic conscience demanded accurate reproductions of actual places. With later novels, however,

the atmosphere or the essence of her scene, not the external verisimilitude, became more important. Through the medium of sparkling irony, relentless satire, subtle wit, sophisticated comedy, and clever symbolism, she presented her protests and criticisms. Her own delicacy and breeding prohibited brutal frankness or a public spread of the full meaning. And when the elusive spirit of life became as actual, for her, as the sharp realism of early novels, she treated time subjectively, and she used symbolic rhythms, contrasting viewpoints, subtle symbols, and recurring impressions of motion to portray what she felt.

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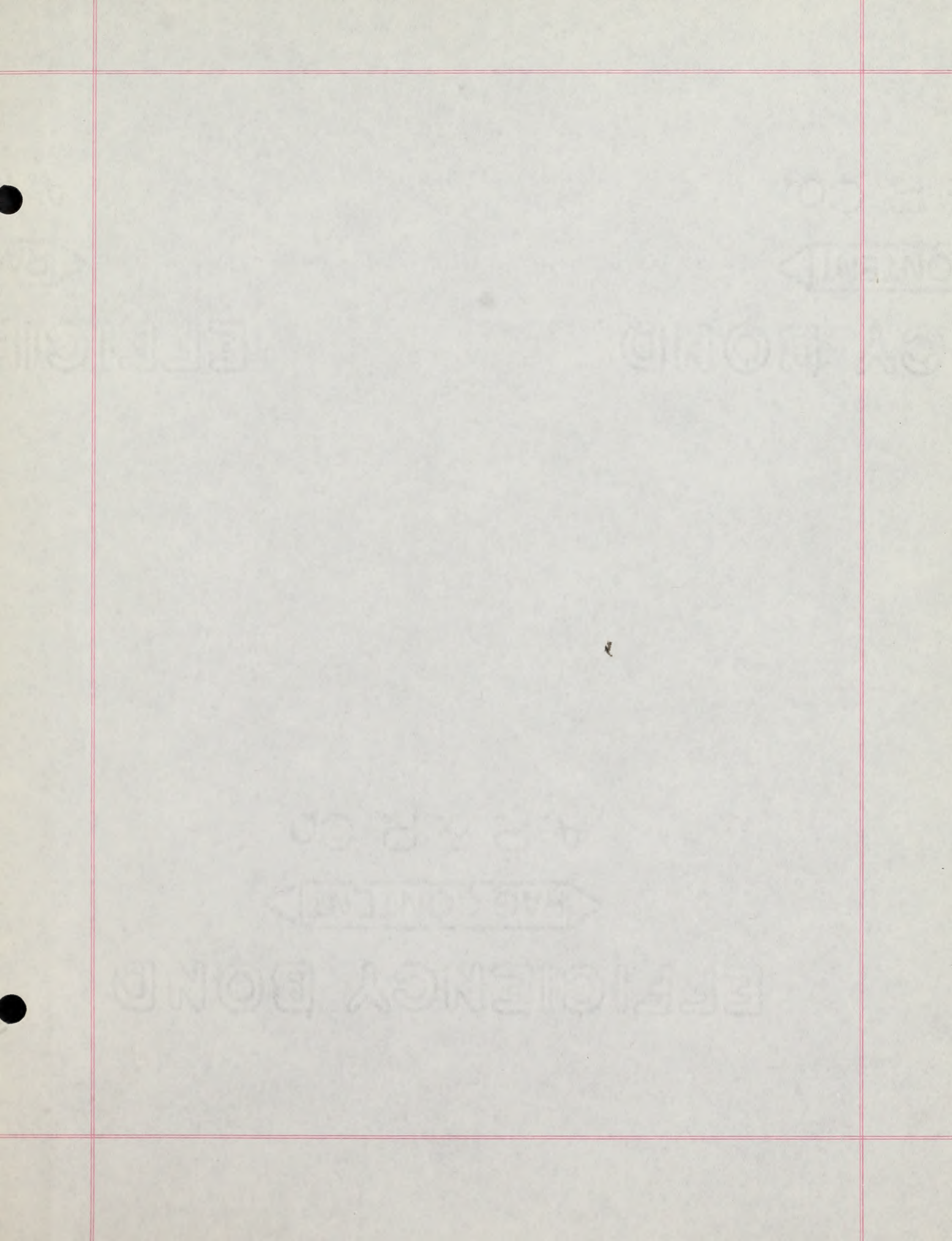
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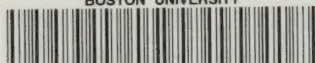
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